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The encouragement and formulation of a student's imaginative response to and "engagement" with literature and the concerns of the papers and summaries of discussions in this Dartmouth Seminar report. James Britton discusses refining the student's natural response to literature by developing his increased sense of form ("principally a sense of the pattern of events") and by encouraging wide reading together with close reading. D. W. Harding, in "The Report of the Study Group," links the development of young people's behavior and personalities to their developing responses to literature, indicating three modes of presentation of literature, the kinds of materials to select, and ways to bring about students' affective responses. James E. Miller's paper, "Literature and the Moral Imagination," suggests that studying literature frees students from platitudinous ethical parochialism and encourages self-examination. In "Reading, Writing, Reality, Unreality," Benjamin Demott emphasizes the need to discuss literature primarily to awaken the students' sense of their own and others' "humanness." A sampling of statements from the conference on general topics concerning the study of literature in the schools is presented by James Squire. Suggested readings on response to literature are also included. (LB)

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RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

JAMES R. SQUIRE

EDITOR

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RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

papers relating to
the Anglo-American Seminar
on the Teaching of English
at
Dartmouth College, New Hampshire
1966

edited by

JAMES R. SQUIRE

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THE DARTMOUTH SEMINAR STUDY GROWS ON RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

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THE DARTMOUTH SEMINAR PAPERS

RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

FOREWORD TO THE SERIES

The Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English was cosponsored by the National Association for the Teaching of English in the United Kingdom, the Modern Language Association of America, and the National Council of Teachers of English in the United States. Supported by funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, it met at Dartmouth College in August and September of 1966. Recommendations of the entire Seminar have been reported in two major volumes: *The Uses of English* by Herbert J. Muller (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967) and *Growth through English* by John Dixon (Reading, England: NATE, 1967; available in North America from MLA and NCTE).

This publication is one in the following series of six monographs presenting papers, summaries of discussion, and related materials being published for the cosponsoring associations by the National Council of Teachers of English.

Creativity in English	Geoffrey Summerfield, editor
Drama in the English Classroom	Douglas Barnes, editor
The Uses of Myth	Paul Olson, editor
Sequence in Continuity	Arthur Eastman, editor
Language and Language Learning	Albert Marckwardt, editor
Response to Literature	James R. Squire, editor

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INTRODUCTION

The reactions to any conference are highly individualistic. Mind meets mind in grappling with ideas, and what results is a reorganization of personal concepts and attitudes quite different from that which any individual would achieve on his own. When discussion is emotionally and intellectually charged, each participant emerges from deliberations with a highly personal synthesis of what actually occurred, and it is not surprising when views differ significantly, particularly among individuals with radically different perspectives and backgrounds. Yet, despite highly personal reactions on some issues, the sense of the total conference and the sense of individual study groups working within a larger conference can take on a significance which is at the same time both a summation of individual views and an extension of them. This is what happened at Dartmouth.

Much has been written and said already about the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English. Among the personal views are those which stress the national differences of participants. Yet the differences which seemed to divide participants were far less significant than the degree of unanimity achieved in attacking many common educational problems. Herbert J. Muller and John Dixon have written eloquently of the sense of the total conference, suggesting the areas of concern which transcend national boundaries. This pamphlet attempts to present the specific

concerns of the Seminar about literary study in our schools and particularly the concerns of its special study group on response to literature.

No member of that study group would see the deliberations in quite the way they are reflected here. Yet the sustained, informed, and frequently intense discussions of that group, so ably led by Professor D. W. Harding, achieved moments of insight into the literary experience far too rarely reflected in either the talk or writing of our profession. The editor hopes that some of the excitement of these discussions is recaptured in this monograph.

James Britton's stimulating paper served as the impetus for discussion by the study group. Although he speaks of conditions and practices in schools in the United Kingdom, his observations seem largely pertinent to America as well. The discussions of the study group began with an analysis of his ideas. James E. Miller's contribution, written for another purpose, seemed to group members to phrase eloquently the Seminar's concern with one of the fundamental dimensions of the literary experience. Benjamin DeMott, in an article prepared initially for another publication, so incisively expressed the emphasis of discussion on literature, rather than literary history or literary criticism, that the inclusion of his views seemed highly appropriate. The selection of quotations from papers and discussions included in this bulletin reflects less the views of the study group on literature than the range of opinion represented by the entire Seminar. These fragments suggest the context in which the group was working. The report from the group itself is the editor's own synthesis of several papers presented by the study group to the total Seminar.

RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

James Britton

Men make some things to serve a purpose, other things simply to please themselves. Literature is a construct of the latter kind, and the proper response to it is therefore (in D. W. Harding's words) to "share in the author's satisfaction that it was as it was and not otherwise." Literature is a construct in language, and language is of all the symbolic systems or modes of representation the most *explicit*, the best fitted, for example, to present a running commentary upon experience. It follows that much of the satisfaction in most literature comes from a contemplation of the form given to events, a characteristic that distinguishes a work of literature from a sculpture or piece of music, where other forms are contemplated. A novel, in Susanne Langer's terms, is "a virtual experience." The satisfaction in which a reader shares, therefore, must have something in common with the satisfaction he feels, not so much in having an experience as in looking back at an experience he has had; it is as though he were to look back at an experience he has *not* had.

Clearly a naive writer and a naive reader may share a satisfaction in circumstances which would only infuriate

or at least disappoint a more sophisticated reader. Is this naive response different in kind from that we desire for literature, or merely different in intensity of feeling or complexity or comprehensiveness or verisimilitude? In other words, are such responses (and children must make many of them) the bad currency we seek to drive out, or are they the tender shoots that must be fostered if there is to be a flower at all? Kate Friedlander, a Freudian psychologist, noticed the tremendous satisfaction young children derive from reading stories related to an Oedipus situation (the fatherless boy proves his manhood in *Treasure Island,* the orphan girl has a series of substitute mothers in *Heidi,* and so on), but she sharply distinguishes this satisfaction from "a literary response," which she seems to feel must somehow have to do with art rather than life. I am sure she is wrong; these responses are unsophisticated in the sense that they might be equally as appropriate to a story of less merit as to *Treasure Island,* but they are the stuff from which, with refinement and development, literary responses are made. Again, at quite a different level, teachers using the "practical criticism" method sometimes introduced passages of literature paired with sentimental or otherwise second-rate writing, inviting comment leading to a verdict. Is not this an attempt to drive out bad currency? If, as I believe, satisfaction with the second-rate differs in degree but not in kind from the higher satisfaction, teachers should surely be concerned to *open* doors; as the pupils advance, other doors will close behind them with no need for the teacher to intervene.

Our aim, then, should be to refine and develop responses the children are already making—to fairy stories, folk songs, pop songs, television serials, their own game-rhymes, and so on. Development can best be described as an increasing sense of form. In literature, I have suggested, this means principally a sense of the pattern of events, and this, however rudimentarily, children certainly feel in the stories that satisfy them. (A three-year-old referred to Cinderella as, "A big sad book about two ugly sisters and a girl they were ugly to.") Progress lies in perceiving gradually more complex patterns of events, in picking up clues more widely

separated and more diverse in character, and in finding satisfaction in patterns of events less directly related to their expectations and, more particularly, their desires; at the same time it lies in also perceiving the form of the varying relationships between elements in the story and reality, as increasingly they come to know that commodity.

But the forms of language itself—its words with their meanings and associations, its syntax, its sounds and rhythms, its images—these contribute to the total form, not as fringe benefits but as inseparable elements of a single effect. "An increasing sense of form" must be taken to mean an extension of responses to include these forms, or perhaps an integration of earlier responses to some of them into a total and inclusive response.

Our sense of literary form increases as we find satisfaction in a greater range and diversity of works, and particularly as we find satisfaction in works which, by their complexity or the subtlety of their distinctions, their scope or their unexpectedness, make greater and greater demands upon us. Our sense of form increases as our frame of reference of reality grows with experience, primary and secondary, of the world we live in. A sense of literary form must grow thus, from within; it is the legacy of past satisfactions. It may become articulate, finding expression in comment and criticism, but equally it may not; and this, as pedants, we find very difficult to admit. There are certainly situations in the classroom where receptive listening and a following silence are more eloquent testimony of satisfaction than any comment could be.

It is probably true that the responses of most adult readers are sharpened (and perhaps more fully integrated with their previous experiences) if they are in some measure formulated, so that they become aware of the nature of the processes that have led to satisfaction. But it is certainly not true for children under the age of eleven or so, children who have not yet passed through what Piaget has called the stage of "concrete operations." Here their responses to literature may indeed be lively, discriminating, and complex, but it will be no help to them to attempt to formulate those responses. There is ample scope for talk, of course,

and value in it; but it will be talk about the people and events of literature and not about forms, conventions, devices, techniques. We should be more afraid of introducing such matters too early than too late.

It is equally clear that to be made aware of the processes that have led to the satisfaction of *another* reader—a teacher, say, or a critic—can have value only in so far as the knowledge helps us formulate our own processes, helps us, that is, become aware of the form of a response we have already made or are capable of making. A critical statement is a discursive form and quite different in organization from the "presentational symbols" or "expressive forms" of literature; an understanding of the one cannot substitute for a response to the other. I take this to be the reader's counterpart of what Robert Frost said of the writer: "You cannot worry a poem into existence, though you may work upon it once it is in being." The author's satisfaction in his work is something he *feels* and not something that can be *proved* right or wrong. The principle of organization of a critical statement is cognitive; that of a work of literature is, in the final analysis, affective.

The point at which critical statements can be of help to a student is therefore a difficult one to determine. It is even more important, however, to consider the manner in which such help is offered. The voice of the critic must not be allowed to seem the voice of authority; more harm has probably been done to the cause of literature by this means than by any other. It is all too easy for the immature student, feeling that his own responses are unacceptable, to disown them and profess instead the opinions of respected critics. And to many teachers, with their eyes on what may rightly go on in other parts of the curriculum, this looks like good teaching. It may of course be the best kind of preparation for an ill-conceived examination, and this may be the real root of the trouble.

To have children take over from their teachers an analysis of a work of literature which their teachers in turn have taken over from the critics or their English professors—this is not a short cut to literary sophistication; it is a short circuit that destroys the whole system. A response to a

work of literature is, after all, an interaction between the work and the reader—not a free interaction, of course, but even the most disciplined responses of two different persons must reflect something of their individual differences. Further, while Shakespeare may continue supreme and Samuel Rogers forgotten, some very general differences of opinion must be expected even among the initiated: there will probably always be respected critics who judge *Silas Marner* to be a bad novel and other critics, equally respected, who regard it highly.

Perhaps the meaning of a work of literature may be compared (as most other things have been) to the ripples that move out from a stone thrown into water; what happens to them depends to some extent upon the configuration of the pond. To me, Blake's poem "Never Seek to Tell Thy Love" has some relevance to the arguments I put forward earlier concerning the difference between a critical statement and a response; I do not expect the poem to suggest that to another reader, unless perhaps his interest in language resembles my own.

How then do we encourage the improved response, the developed sense of form?

A girl of eight was asked what sort of things she liked reading. "Well," she said, "there's *Treasure Island*—that's a bloody one for when I'm feeling boyish. And there's *Little Men*—a sort of half-way one." "Don't you ever feel girlish?" she was asked. "Yes, when I'm tired. Then I read *The Smallest Dormouse*."

We must expect, and encourage, reading to go on for various purposes at various levels and not concern ourselves solely with performance at maximum effort. "Reading for enjoyment" (to pick up an ancient controversy) will certainly be an apt description of the lower levels of effort but is probably misleading when applied to the most demanding kind of reading. Satisfaction, however, the appropriate satisfaction we have repeatedly referred to, must be there in the end, and no examination or other external incentive can take its place; reading without satisfaction is like the desperate attempts we make to keep a car going when it has run out of petrol.

That a student should read *more books* with satisfaction may be set down as one objective; as a second, he should read books with *more satisfaction.* We need to foster, in other words, wide reading side by side with close reading. The importance of freedom of choice is obvious enough in the first situation, less recognized in the second, since close reading is usually taken to mean class teaching. But choice is no less desirable in the classroom, and students should whenever possible choose what is studied by the class as a whole or, better still, by groups on their own with occasional help from the teacher.

The problems lie, then, not in knowing what to do but in getting enough suitable books sufficiently accessible. Paperbacks have made things much easier; local prescriptions and proscriptions that have militated against spending money in this way are on the decline in some areas, still need vigorous attack in others. When other attempts have failed, boys and girls themselves have sometimes provided a class library by pooling paperbacks, say for a term at a stretch. Such a collection may need supplementing to meet the needs of the best readers, who are likely to contribute the most rewarding books and find few of comparable value in return.

Close reading and wide reading should not be thought of as quite separate activities. Active response to a work of literature invokes what might be called an unspoken monologue of responses—a fabric of comment, speculation, relevant autobiography. It is natural for something which one member of the class has read to be brought before the rest of them at his suggestion as the object of a closer scrutiny. (It is always preferable of course that a passage studied should in some way be related to the whole book.) Talk in class should arise from, and further stimulate, the individual monologues of response.

It is in the context of this talk that views of the critic or teacher can best be handled if they are to be useful at all. Clearly, for advanced college-preparatory pupils they can be valuable. As part of the to and fro of discussion critical judgments may be accepted for the help they offer; if the discussion is as open as it should be, they will frequently

be disputed and sometimes rejected by individual students. The attitudes engendered by the mode and tone of discussion carry forward and influence the reading of both literature and criticism.

In all I have said so far I have accepted the terms of my commission as they would be generally understood. By "literature" I have therefore meant the body of works represented in literature syllabuses, studied in university schools of English, and the like. However, before finishing my task I should like very briefly to point to an unorthodox way of defining literature which has the advantage of placing it among linguistic activities generally.

I would go back to my opening paragraph and define literature as a particular kind of utterance—an utterance that a writer has "constructed" not for use but for his own satisfaction.

Sapir pointed out long ago that man, unlike the zoological animals, does not handle reality by direct and *ad hoc* means but via a symbolic representation of the world as he has experienced it. Given this, two courses are open to a man: he may operate in the real world by means of his representation, or he may operate *directly upon the representation itself*—improvising upon it in any way that pleases him (that allays his anxieties, for example, or sweetens his disappointments, or whets his appetite, or flatters his ego).

We all use language in both these ways, to get things done in the outer world and to manipulate the inner world. Action and decision belong to the former use; freedom from them in the latter enable us to attend to other things—to the forms of language, the patterns of events, the feelings. We take up as it were the role of spectators: spectators of our own past lives, our imagined futures, other men's lives, impossible events. When we *speak* this language, the nearest name I can give it is "gossip"; when we *write* it, it is literature.

By this definition, then, literature is not simply something that other people have done. What a child writes is of the same order as what the poet or novelist writes and valid for the same reasons. What are the reasons? Why do men

improvise upon their representations of the world? Basically because we never cease to long for more lives than the one we have; in the role of spectator we can participate in an infinite number.

RESPONSE TO LITERATURE: THE REPORT OF THE STUDY GROUP

D. W. Harding, Chairman

James Britton's discussion of "Response to Literature" was accepted as the framework for most of this report, but only with the understanding that

(a) response is not passive but implies active involvement;
(b) it includes not only immediate response but later effects;
(c) overt response (verbal, etc.) may indicate very little of the inner response.

Though central attention should be given to literature in the ordinary sense, it is impossible to separate response to literature sharply from response to other stories, films, or television plays, or from children's own personal writing or spoken narrative. In all of these the student contemplates represented events in the role of a spectator, not for the sake of active intervention. But since his response includes in some degree accepting or rejecting the values and emotional attitudes which the narration implicitly offers, it will influence, perhaps greatly influence, his future appraisals of behavior and feeling.

If we could obliterate the effects on a man of all the occasions on

which he was "merely a spectator" it would be profoundly to alter his character and outlook.[1]

Most values are culturally derived; at their best they are the currency given to the adjustments to experience of the most sensitive members of society. Thus, in entering into the "virtual experience" of influential works of literature a child is offered a flow and recoil of sympathies that accords with the culture pattern in which he is growing up.

If it is accepted, then, that a work of literature will embody values in the broadest sense of the term, what is the relationship between its appraisal as literature and appraisal of the moral values it embodies?

Clearly a reader cannot share in the writer's satisfaction in the organization of feelings when—all allowances having been made—he cannot share those feelings. It is this which will prevent some readers from finding satisfaction in works which other readers approve, but it would be rash to say that the judgment in either case had been made on moral as distinct from literary grounds. That one could criticize a reader for having failed to make necessary allowances is obviously true—as might happen when a pacifist reads a war novel; but there are likely to be cases where a work is universally declared bad because the values it embodies are so out of key with those of the society in which it appears that no reader is able to enter into the feelings comprising its affective organization. This would accord with a generally accepted view that moral values exercise no restraint upon an author's choice of theme or topic but are tantamount to a restraint upon what he makes of it.

The Emergence of Response to Literature

Since young children learn literature from hearing it, classroom discussion of their responses should start from those activities that arise from listening. It seems possible, even probable, that the basic structure of these activities (i.e., of an adult response to literature) will develop by the age of eleven, given reasonable circumstances.

There appear to be four levels of response, emerging in sequence: briefly they are responses to the quality and

[1]D. W. Harding, "The Role of the Onlooker," *Scrutiny*, VI (1937), 3.

pattern of (1) sounds, (2) events, (3) roles, and (4) worlds. A few notes follow to suggest the various dimensions of response.

SOUND: When children bounce on mother's knee to a song or a nursery rhyme, when they join in the chorus, when they chant "maximum capacity" round the room, and maybe when they chuckle at special words, names, and puns, they are responding to the texture and rhythm of sounds. Such overt actions seem to be both elements of their enjoyment and signs of it.

EVENT: Both rhythm and form involve a pattern of expectation, both for the satisfaction and the modification of the expected pattern. Stories for very young children embody a pattern of events within this rhythm or form. When a child corrects the storyteller and wants the story word perfect, he is asking for confirmation of the pattern (in one respect or the other). At a later stage he may make up topsy-turvy stories with reversals of the pattern; finally he will improvise and impose his own.

ROLE: In free play or classroom drama, children take up the roles of characters in their stories, or perhaps continue the role playing that the story involved them in: "I'm Jack and this is the beanstalk and you be the Giant." Sometimes children will replay the story, sometimes reshape and improvise on it, perhaps relating the roles and events more nearly to their own wishes.

WORLD: While a story is being read aloud to a group a child may interpose: "He's a funny boy" (about Jan in "The Silver Sword" perhaps), and the group may begin to talk about his background, his relations with the other characters, etc. A new variety of talk develops to relate and organize elements of the world of that story or to relate the world of that story to the child's own world. It will tie in all the four kinds of response, giving some a new articulation.

Any discussion of ways to foster literary response at different stages of the student's education must be qualified by

the recognition that there are wide individual differences in rate of development and that in recent times the earlier onset of puberty, changed social expectations, and powerful commercial influences have modified previously accepted ideas about the stages of childhood, adolescence, and early adult life. Yet some broadly defined succession of educational stages has to be assumed.

Up to the age of about eleven the problems seem to be less formidable than they are in early adolescence. The younger child can respond directly and unashamedly to poems, for instance, and is less guarded in his personal responses than he becomes later. Children at this age are largely concerned with inner directed structuring of experience, not with manipulating it for socially determined ends. Perhaps we should note Melanie Klein's suggestion that "the connections between conscious and unconscious are closer in young children than in adults, and that infantile repressions are less powerful."[2]

Around nine or ten, children develop an increasingly "extroverted" outlook; this should be allowed for in the material they are offered. At the same age greatly extended private reading has to be catered for, many children exploring widely among books and devouring them at great speed.

After about eleven, children are likely to put up defenses against emotional disturbances (especially those associated with heightened sexual responsiveness) and against the direct expression of emotion that may be found in literary works. Love poems become relatively unacceptable, although poems associated with friendship and generalized benevolence, to which they make stock responses, are often highly acceptable.

Some of the changes occurring after fourteen (especially for children whose schooling is soon to end) may be due less to adolescence than to the uncertainties and discords that come over children as they realize they are about to enter a world of jobs and social responsibility.

At fifteen or sixteen, problems arise from the uneasiness

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[2]Quoted in David Holbrook, *The Exploring Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 134.

that young people commonly feel about expressing some range of their emotional experience, though they may have strongly sentimental responses beneath a veneer of roughness. A number of common masks for these responses are not difficult to identify: they seek the safety of conformity to mass attitudes or of participating in mass responses; they refuse to express response (not a refusal to respond, rather a refusal to express one in so many words, perhaps because of peer group pressure); they resort to adult utilitarian calculus: "what good is all this?"; the "better" or older students have recourse to literary criticism or explicit responses capable of more or less complete formulation, representing, perhaps, an early capitulation to adult standards.

In part, of course, the behavior of adolescents is a result of developments in internal emotional economy. But we may also guess that the barriers mentioned above are as much responses to social conditioning as they are attempts to control inner turmoil. For one thing, they may reveal a badly directed early education which has deprived the child of the opportunity to deal easily with symbolic expressions. It has been said that, in adolescence especially, education is designed "to starve out, through silence and misrepresentation, the capacity to have genuine and strongly felt experience, and to replace it by the conventional symbols that serve as the common currency of daily life. . . . It is still the spontaneous, vivid, and immediate that is most feared, and feared the more because so much desired (by adults)." Thus, in early education we may do unconsciously (or at least without overt intention) what in later education we do quite consciously (at least in the United States). It seems likely that one result of adolescence is that the child learns to repress "meanings that are not subject to consensual validation. . . ."[3]

Adolescents often see the relevance of works of literature to the emotional problems of their age group and sometimes welcome the opportunity of discussing it in class or with

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[3] Edgar Z. Friedenberg, *Dignity of Youth and Other Atavisms* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), pp. 5 and 70; *The Vanishing Adolescent* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 20.

the teacher—though they may well resent any *expectation* that they should do so. The teacher needs great tact in providing an opportunity without seeming to press an invitation. Moreover, works to be read should always be chosen both for their value as literature as well as for their possible bearing on psychological reactions of young people. Around the age of sixteen, students welcome literature centering in nature and friendship. From sixteen to eighteen, teachers expect them to tackle poetry (e.g., Hopkins) that fully extends mature adult readers, though presumably not expecting a mature response. This is probably valuable and in any case inevitable because there seems to be little good poetry below the adult but above the childhood level. In fiction, however, a choice of material for students not yet adult is necessary and possible.

At this and other points there is a need for more exact knowledge (preferably based on longitudinal studies) about changes in the literary responses of boys and girls as they grow up.

Modes of Approach to Literature

It seemed to us that good teaching at different stages depends as much on the mode of presentation, and the mode of response consequently implied, as on the selection of materials. Three such modes of presentation were distinguished:

The Individual Child with the Individual Book. From the teacher's view, this requires finding or assisting the child or adolescent to find "the right book at the right time." The approach requires availability of a wide variety of appropriate titles, teacher acquaintance with the books, and teacher understanding of the individual child. Any view of a program in literature as emphasizing the refinement of the individual's own response to literature necessarily sees guided individual reading as central to the literary education of the child, rather than as an appendage or adjunct to be relegated to book lists, "outside" reading, or out-of-school activity. In practice, this view leads to demands for classroom book collections, better and more accessible school libraries, pupil-teacher conferences on books, class and group

discussion of books which students read on their own, and similar activities.

Literature as Group Experience. Some literature and experiences in literature are corporate possessions, and classroom approaches should recognize and respond to this fact. Such group experiences may include storytelling, folksongs and ballads, film viewing, listening to what others have written, creative dramatics, choral reading, oral interpretation, dramatic interpretation, role playing, listening to recorded literature, and related activities. In such group experiences, the child (whether five or fifteen) relates his own response to the response of other children. What the teacher strives to achieve is far more than a cozy feeling of group "togetherness"; rather he attempts to promote a communal response which is at the same time affective and intellectual, personal and "other directed." Often a return to the oral reading and rereading of the same poetry selections can develop in the group a rich sensitivity to the pleasures of a shared aesthetic experience.

Presentation of Literary Material Accompanied by Discussion. A common approach in the classroom is the reading of a work of literature, with assistance from the teacher, followed by informal discussion (sometimes called "talk" in the United Kingdom) or more structured discussion. Such an approach seems most appropriate when the teacher finds it necessary to assist the reader in creating a context for the work. An alternate form of teacher presentation is oral reading by the teacher as students follow in their books, with the teacher stopping from time to time to increase personal contact and enjoyment by shaping perceptions on the work. Similarly, teachers may elect to read only the initial passages—sufficient to orient the reader and to rouse his interest—and then ask students to continue silently. With some selections and some students, teachers will ask for reading prior to discussion and then use the subsequent classroom exchange of ideas, perceptions, and articulated reactions as a way to encourage a fuller reaction.

Since the purpose of presentation by the teacher is to promote the student's understanding of and engagement

with the literary work, such direct presentation should normally be reserved for selections difficult for students; works which are accessible to the individual reader should be read by students on their own. Because of its unique qualities, as well as its length, most poetry is perhaps best read aloud in the classroom at every level (often again and again), whereas literature from other genres (fiction, drama, rhetorical literature, etc.) is often best approached in other ways.

It seems likely that these modes of approach will vary from level to level in emphasis, in the ways in which they find expression in the classroom, and in their appropriateness for different kinds of literary experience.

At the primary level, as children are learning to achieve independence in reading, a program of extensive individual reading may seem less central to the literary education of children, although even here individual selection of picture books can stimulate personal choice. Using the stories told or dictated by a child for his own reading is related to this approach, though using such creative materials for an entire group is also closely allied with presentation (Approach No. 3). Since at this stage many children will clearly need help in the processes of reading which lead to literary experience, more reliance on teacher presentation may be appropriate. Oral reading of poems and stories by the teacher provides experience with literature which children cannot read silently; often a burst of response will follow. A question or two concerning a selection often elicits a latent response in such activities.

During late childhood or early adolescence (ages 10-15), the emphasis in classroom approaches seems to shift, but all three approaches identified here tend to be used by some teachers. As the child gains independence in reading, the teacher encourages wider and wider personal reading. To guide such reading he finds it mandatory to schedule individual conferences with each child. Because research has demonstrated that most children during this period will read more books than at any other time during their school careers, a carefully organized program of guided individual reading seems a necessity.

A continuing obligation remains to assist the young reader to find satisfaction in selections he would not select or understand on his own. Most poetry will be introduced by the teacher (Approach No. 3), most often through oral reading followed by discussion. Short selections may be introduced to assist pupils with special reading problems.

At this level group experiences with literature take a somewhat different form. As children become more and more inhibited, dramatic play and storytelling become less an experience than a social threat. Puppet plays, which enable a child to express a personal response without revealing the humiliating constraints of his own body, are used effectively by some teachers. Interpretative readings and dramatic interpretations of scenes from plays can also be important. Because oral interpretation assists teachers and pupils to identify problems and differences in individual responses and can help even inarticulate students react to individual works, more stress on oral approaches than is characteristic of teaching in many American schools seems desirable.

During the later school years (ages 15-18), the approaches continue in a somewhat different relationship. As social and personal interests of students expand, wide reading tends to occupy less of the adolescent's personal time. The child's individual interests in literary experience may be increasingly satisfied by forms other than the book—by recorded literature, for example, by films, or by theatrical experiences. The wise teacher will continue a strong program of individual reading but will expand this program to include discussion of other kinds of literary experience.

Group experience with the drama may tend to become more formalized, depending to a greater degree on interpretation of texts written by others, but continuing to use improvisation as an approach. Some teachers use drama to stimulate personal expression of emotion, but others caution that adolescents fear to reveal their own emotions in the group and prefer to interpret emotions of others. The problems of overcoming the self-consciousness of adolescents cause many teachers to overlook the contributions of drama in fostering an active response to literature.

As the young reader proceeds through school, teacher presentation of literature followed by discussion (in whatever form) can introduce young readers to new kinds of literature, can assist them in the problems of perception and interpretation, and thus can free them to read increasingly mature books on their own. Close reading of individual literary texts pointing toward illumination of the particular literary experience and its relationship to all human experience, rather than analyzing purely external characteristics, seems to be the major method in guiding the refinement of student response. But unless the teacher stresses the processes of reading and responding to literature, rather than individual texts as ends in themselves, he is not likely to help the student reader find satisfaction in more mature literature on his own. And unless the "presentation-discussion" approaches are carefully related to a program of individual reading, the student will have little opportunity to apply whatever competence in analysis and response he has acquired.

A word needs to be said about issues arising from the choice of selections for presentation in a class. Clearly the teacher will need to consider the characteristics of particular children and young people based on his past experience with students of this kind, as well as his own reading of literature, and should select those literary selections to which he feels a high percentage of students may respond. Because of concern lest "teacher presented" material dominate literary study in the secondary school, many urge that most such teaching concentrate on shorter selections—the poem, the short story or essay, even "extracts" from longer works. (Others would challenge heavy reliance on extracts as violating the unity of a work and preventing student readers from experiencing a work of art as art, as an organic whole.) Still, most young people will not respond fully and maturely to longer works without some help in learning the various dimensions of response. Although it seems likely that in some schools too great an emphasis is placed on repetitive teaching of certain kinds of novels, i.e., novels which tend to present similar problems in read-

ing and response, sound planning will assure that these forms are not neglected.

Any mode of presentation, to be educationally successful, must presuppose the teacher's genuine enthusiasm for the work of literature (allowing for the limited or different appeal that works suitable for young children may have for the adult). One consequence of this is that he cannot be content to leave students to their own unguided enthusiasms, although he may be well advised to start from those. He has the responsibility of leading students towards the full range of literary experience that he himself can compass. Certain works, because of the quality of their theme and treatment, have provided rich literary experiences to readers of varied backgrounds. Such writing, for instance, by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Twain, Lawrence, Melville, or Frost, though in some sense part of a cultural heritage, is not a packet to be transmitted inert. It is alive and changing; each generation takes from it what it needs and adds to it in its turn.

In guiding the reading of young people, the teacher has an obligation to move them towards more mature literary experience. They may be ready for particular works at different times and the experience may be presented in different ways, but an education that continues until the student reaches sixteen or seventeen years should provide some introduction to imaginative literature of the highest order. "All pupils, including those of very limited attainments, need the experience of contact with great literature, and can respond to its universality."[4] Whether by building on the points of contact between the book and reader, or by seizing on opportunities which emerge in the students' own responses to experience, the teacher must help young readers gain some insight into works which have conveyed significant experience to discriminating adults. Maybe no single literary work is so important that it must be read by all students; there are bound to be gaps in individual experiences. But any literary education should include acquaintance with Chaucer, Shakespeare, some Romantic poets, and some major fiction of the past two centuries.

[4] *Half Our Future*, p. 155.

The Formulation of Response to Literature

Let us turn now to the problem, especially evident in the later years of secondary education and at the university, of the proper place of formulated critical comment and of teaching *about* literature. In the first place, "study of literature" is an ambiguous and even deceiving term, which often deflects the energies of teachers from what many of them now consider to be their primary concern. It suggests, perhaps necessarily, that in the classroom experience with literary works, students and teachers should be seeking regularities and similarities, treating works as the source of data for establishing general statements about classes of literary works, their parts, their authors, or the circumstances of their composition; or that they should be composing rather closed formulations of the probable causes in works of assorted effects in readers. However useful, these are activities more appropriate to historians and critics than to young people whose sensibilities or powers of imaginative sympathy are as yet unpracticed and untrained. Without undervaluing or disregarding cognitive analyses of literary works or conceptual schemes for analyzing "literature," many teachers would say that in the classroom the chief concern should be for extending the student's disciplined acquaintance with and response to a certain number of literary works.

Achieving such an acquaintance is different from the study of a body of knowledge, because the student's affective response is an integral part of the experience with the work. That he likes or dislikes his exercises in geology may be a pedagogical help or hindrance, but the essential task is completed if he learns and understands the facts. In literature, however, it is the knowledge of facts which may be a help or hindrance; the essential task is not done without his affective involvement. In its ideal form, comprehension of a literary work should involve the response of a whole, organized person; and it should be consistent with a framework created, first, by an intellectual grasp of the work, its parts, and its principles of organization, and second, by knowledge of the world the work refers to,

its connection with the student's own world and experience, and its relation to other works.

The ideas of "response" and "involvement" are emphasized here to counter the consequences of too rigid application of the otherwise valuable notion of the work of art as a thing in itself. As the term is often used, *work of art* suggests the existence of something quite and wholly outside the perceiver, existing in ineluctable perfection and subject to only the most partial and inadequate approach. The phraseology used here hopefully suggests that works of art are by no means so separate; rather they exist always through their moment-by-moment experiencing by one or several perceivers. In a significant sense, works of art exist as perceived, or as a constantly growing and developing body of perceptions.

Of course there is something "out there" which is, or can be, an object of some kind of attention and which provides a referent to test the fidelity of the perceiver's responses. Hence there ought to be no suggestion that "response" in our usage refers to anything free-floating or merely emotional. To clarify this point, it may be prudent to indicate the various activities that may be subsumed under the term "response." The primary center of the whole activity of reading is some sort of state in our feelings that we can call, for lack of a better word, enjoyment. How enjoyment comes about is never very clear, but it seems to depend in some fashion on various kinds of activities that lead to understanding. It may also be supported by those typical though maybe not essential activities that form a kind of intelligent scanning and internalized comment (perhaps preverbal) on the work as it is being experienced.

Finally there is the activity that we are stimulated to or prepared for by all our other contacts with a book. When we have invested a good deal into reading a book, there is, as it were, a reverberation of the work in our minds, which leads us to return (sometimes again and again) to elements of that experience. Perhaps the process is similar to that of a discussion where we sympathetically entertain the frame of reference of our fellow participant, following through its implications into realms of novelty hitherto unsuspected,

and then recoil momentarily as we set this new frame and its implications against the context of our own beliefs and assumptions. A successive scanning and reorganization follows, as we move between the novelties we have entertained and our accepted tenets. Just so, perhaps, the partial world of any work of art questions and confirms elements of our existing representational world, making us look for a new order that assimilates both. This, too, is our "response."

In the optimum situation, the teacher is seen as one who directs, or at least leads, a process by which students achieve, within the limits set by their different abilities and funded experience, feeling comprehensions of various works of literary art. This process should be seen as a continuing one (only part of which can occur in the classroom) under the direction of the teacher. Of less importance, therefore, is what is often seen as the one valid form and test of classroom reading; that is, the formulation of descriptive statements about responses, interpretations, or structures.

It is likely that a demand for more analysis, judgment, interpretation, will inhibit proper affective response. This would certainly be true for younger readers and probably for undergraduates too. (Results of premature formulation are horridly visible even in graduate students, but these are perhaps the most accessible group for the teacher trying to erode formulation and get back to response.) James Britton suggests in his discussion that "the responses of most adult readers are sharpened (and perhaps more fully integrated with their previous experiences) if they are in some measure formulated." "In some measure" needs a long hard look. We often suppose, encouraged by schematic literary criticism and the demands of examinations, that formulation should be explicit, broad, and objectified. As teachers we should remember how long it takes even to respond to poems of our own choice, how often we are quite naturally numb to parts or wholes as we encounter literature, and not expect too much from the students. First encounters in the classroom should deliberately hold back formulation, should back away from everything that

isn't tentative and partial. We need to encourage, very warmly, verifications from personal experience, not frown on the "That's me" identification with a character.

People who need to use the concept of "discipline" in talking about response will be uneasy about the freedom of "That's me," but it can perhaps be accommodated even to a literary respect for the work of art. "That's me" has two components, and our aim is to move dynamically from the "me" of personal identification to the "that" of the poem or the object in the poem. The discipline lies in the attentiveness to the "that," and it should be made plain that there is no real dichotomy here, but a natural movement from subject to object and back again. The "That's me" may well reveal a very partial and too selective selection from the work, but the teacher will get nowhere in the attempt to make the work meaningful as experience if he does not begin with the "me." And this kind of identifying is often more interesting than it looks. A middle-aged schoolmaster who said "I am Bobadil" was not just being confessional, for he proceeded to look around and say that everyone else was too. The discussion of the "that" was a discussion of the humanness of Jonson which moved miles away from autobiographical chat. But the particularized responses should be primary. There will be movement round the many people in the class, and a restrained and thoughtful sharing of personal, incomplete, and implicit response which can lead back to the particular work, and to repeated sensitive readings. The reference to life is not purely illustrative but confirms the affective experience of literature, and is of course its foundation.

The teacher should aim at the teacher's, not the scholar's best, dropping the possessiveness and awed respect we all seem to feel so readily for works of literature. The teacher reporting the "low level" exclamatory response, or "the autobiographical bit," or the "extreme" selection betrays an unholy preference for poems rather than persons. If the implicit or partial or wrong response is stamped on by these literature lovers, there will be little chance that the student can be taken back from the "me" to the "that" in an extended exploration of the work's properties.

Some properties will be more easily explored than others. In some circumstances early or broad formulation is particularly inappropriate. When should the teacher try especially hard to sit back, relax, and shut up, to expose fragments, elicit fragments, pass on, be superficial? When the student is responding to something very distant in time and convention, say Spenser or eighteenth century verse or Scott, then formulation should wait—empathy is not going to come easily (if at all) and students should not be made to feel that they are aesthetic cripples if they simply do not respond. A toleration of the selective or superficial response may really be a way in. Recognizing the response implicit in an emphasis that looks odd or hostile is an important action of the teacher's sensibility. It may be hard to move from the "that" to the "me" in reading Scott, but there are those other cases in which it is hard to separate the subject and object, as in an emotionally or sensationally confusing first encounter with something very raw or unaesthetic or powerful (or all three), say James Baldwin or Donne or Lawrence. And there are those works to which we have an over-acculturated response which keeps the "me" miles away from the "that." How hard it is to take in the fantasy in *Jane Eyre* or Paul Dombey, inhibited as we may be at various ages by current attitudes to "objectivity," "maturity," "sentimentality," and dramatic conventions of narrative.

Response is a word that reminds the teacher that the experience of art is a thing of our making, an activity in which we are our own interpretative artist. The dryness of schematic analysis of imagery, symbols, myth, structural relations, *et al.* should be avoided passionately at school and often at college. *It is literature, not literary criticism, which is the subject.* At the present time, there is too much learning about literature in place of discriminating enjoyment, and many students arrive at and leave universities with an unprofitable distrust of their personal responses to literature. At the university, as in the secondary school, the explicit analysis of literature should be limited to the *least* required to get an understanding of the work, within the student's limits, and the aim should be to return as

soon as possible to a direct response to the text. Of course, one must also realize that with the present forms of school and university examinations, this is impossible in the United Kingdom and often difficult in the United States.

LITERATURE AND THE MORAL IMAGINATION

James E. Miller, Jr.

In every work of literature there is a perspective on the world and on life. In this perspective there is implicit or explicit what is called variously a moral dimension, a system of values, a vision of the nature of things, a truth. Although this element appears frequently to be the most exciting aspect of a work of literature, it is never sufficient in itself to constitute the success of a work: there must also be (among much else) artistry, craftsmanship, the structural or shaping imagination, a sense of things, of people, of life.

The experiencing of a work of literature means in some sense an absorption into the drama of the work; this imaginative experience parallels in its elements the nature of a real experience. Thus, as real experience frequently calls into play moral judgment, so the imaginative experiencing of a work of literature frequently calls into being the moral imagination.

In the teaching of literature, as it involves the moral imagination, there are two ways to achieve a major failure: first, to treat the moral dimension as though it were the sole end of literature, to extract it, to encapsulate it, to

divorce it from its material or dramatic embodiment and offer it to students as abstract truth; or, second, to avoid the difficulties and dangers of discussing the moral dimension by ignoring and concentrating on formal, aesthetic, structural, or other elements. Both of these methods lead to apathy and imaginative sterility in the classroom.

Nor can the teacher avoid these failures by selecting works of literature to teach that do not disturb, that are not "subversive" or upsetting—works that are, in short, ethically antiseptic or morally neutral (or neutered). The curriculum should be open to books of a great variety of values and visions, including those that rub against the grain of society, that counter prevailing values.

As the teacher of literature is concerned with developing and expanding the student's total imaginative capacity, so he must be concerned with all aspects of the imagination, including the moral imagination. He should not become [illegible] question, discuss, and explore with his students. Such exploration will lead more frequently to complexity than to simplicity, to ambiguity than to precision, to paradox than to resolution.

And some powerful, classic literary works will embody sets of beliefs so remote in culture or age that neither the teacher nor the students are likely to find them congenial. It remains the responsibility of the teacher, however, to render such works accessible to the students, perhaps by drawing such distinctions for the students as I. A. Richards suggests in his opposed terms, *verifiable belief* and *imaginative assent*.

One of the major purposes for offering a wide variety of authors and works in the literary curriculum is to liberate the student from his ethical parochialism and rigidity, to free him from a moral position often platitudinous and frequently unexamined. Literature properly presented should confront the student (like life itself) with a multiplicity of ethical systems or moral perspectives. This expansion and deepening of the student's moral awareness constitutes the education of his moral imagination. It is one important (but not the sole) aim of literary study.

READING, WRITING, REALITY, UNREALITY...[5]

Benjamin DeMott

Let me begin with a market report: This is a moment for provocative comment about the teaching of English or the humanities. One combative magazine article complaining against the teaching of literature in the graduate school can transform a sane, rightminded professor into an educational statesman. (I think of the example of Mr. Arrowsmith.) Or, for another example: the famous Tufts Conference on Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching recently published a first account of its doings—the author is nothing less than a "White House aide." And when the man in question turned to the teaching of arts and humanities, he dwelt long on a slogan—"Throw out the Art Part" —that plainly was meant to enrage (or, as they say it in innovatese, to *stimulate*).

And there are other events, equally near at hand, confirming that opportunities, Marketwise, go on multiplying. A few months ago, at a meeting of English teachers rather too dominated—for a minute or two—by the gospel according to Northrop Frye, the present writer rose to propose

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that a relation between books and beings might exist, and, further, that closing out such relations might do dirt on our subject. The remark was picked up by the secretary of the Modern Language Association, rubbed and slightly inflamed for the social columns of PMLA, and has since piqued a publisher into offering cash in advance for a tiny treatise about "The Scandal in English Teaching."

Should we tire ourselves explaining this situation to each other? Of course not. The market exists partly because the tide of slobbism in the culture at large—the force we call the democratic surge—hasn't significantly weakened either with the passage of years or with the onset of the culture boom. And partly it exists because the voice of the literary subculture that most often reaches the public is that of the critical redskin or downright life-monger, a character who for some reason positively delights in the approach of an age of men without art.

But if there is, as I admit, no urgent need for explanation of the situation, there is a need—at least for people with notions about teaching that are as homely as mine—to make their assumptions unusually explicit, even if that means bringing forth ponderous, self-regarding credos, even if the impression left is that of a neurotic preoccupation with objections, blows, charges of philistinism and the like.

Autotelic worlds

My first assumption is that it's by no means fatuous to attend to poems as real objects, autonomous, autotelic, free-standing. Everyone who reads decently knows the extraordinary experience of raptness, selfless joy, tranced involvement in the movement of a poem or story. When we ask our questions about internal organization, point of view, rhetorical modes and the rest, we do show forth to our students our own fascination with the texture of the seizing hand on our wrist, our own interest and wonder at the ways in which we have at once been worked on and have ourselves worked in the encounter with the poem or story. And the uses of such acknowledgments aren't inconsiderable; students and teacher are elevated by them. The critical redskin

who doubts the worth of such activity is, among other things, a man out of touch, someone unaware of the evidence about what repeatedly happens to human beings as a result of their effort to speak in acknowledgment of the spell or illusion of a work of literary art. Several times a year, each of us reads an essay about poem or book or *oeuvre* proving in itself that a human being can be ennobled by such effort. Nor is it true that you invariably have to look hard for such work. Last year, for instance, two successive issues of one literary magazine provided just the sort of proof I have in mind. (I am thinking of the issues of the *Sewanee* that carried Mr. Ransom on "Gerontion" and Mr. Donald Pearce on the Nightingale Ode.)

But to say this isn't to say that in most classes about structure and design (nature of the speaker, relations among images, linguistic continuities, interplay between dramatic units, etc.) that the aim of effecting a return to an experience, a reenactment, is sufficiently clear. Rather, these classes often resemble efforts to touch the bones of an object that never was alive, that never had laid a hand on anyone. The laws of anatomy are brought into the center of the classroom, and the humanness and livingness of lyric and narrative cease to count. And the English class becomes a place distinguished chiefly by total obliviousness to Whitman's great words:

> The process of reading is not a half-sleep, but, in highest sense, a gymnast's struggle . . . the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or framework. Not the book needs so much to be the complete thing, but the reader of the book does.

A commitment to trivia

That such obliviousness can become a rule seems to me symptomatic of the English teacher's forced retreat to the periphery of his subject; his frequent inability to escape a community- and profession-imposed obligation to triviality —an obligation to names not things, apparatus not inquiry, the window rather than the view. When I speak of a "retreat," I am simply saying that I believe the English

teacher isn't usually and primarily engaged in the activity of encouraging students to find the bearing of this book and that poem and this "composition" on their own lives; he is not using the authority of art, the actualities of the imagination, as they can be used. I believe the English teacher is inhibited about giving himself to the labor of drawing men into an effort to reflect upon and understand their own experience (a labor that art—and student composition—make much easier). I believe that while he declares allegiance to traditional slogans about his subject, while he goes on announcing the supreme relevance of literature to the development of character, imagination, responsiveness to life, goes on declaring that books truly do "connect," he, nevertheless, concentrates in his day-to-day teaching on other matters. He busies himself introducing students to arcane literary hierarchies—the mystique of Great Books, etc. (Take a book, any book, *this* book.) The high school teacher and the college teacher function here in much the same ways. They assign on opening day a reading list—*Silas Lapham* or *Marner* or James Joyce or *Hard Times* ("You must have the trad, you see") or whatever. Everyone takes in, by implication, that this *is* the Subject: the first fact about literature is that there is high art and low and teacher knows the high. (The low is what other people read.) And teacher will tell you which is which even if you don't ask. The key illumination he offers is that the low—often the student's own or "natural" choice—is beneath mention, does not organize life, does not lay an order over against experience, cannot be usefully attended to with an eye toward discovering *its* relevance to human life.

He, the teacher, introduces students to arcane literary hierarchies, and, in addition, introduces them to "objective" structures, designs, and effects. And he introduces them to the history of literature, the history of language, the lives of the great writers, their "philosophical outlook," and the development of literary form. (Shakespeare liberated the sonnet from Petrarch, John Donne liberated the sonnet from Shakespeare, then came the heroic couplet as released from Milton and soon the Romantic poets protested against

the heroic couplet on behalf of the sloppier quatrain and then we have Ezra Pound.) And the teacher sees himself always as the enemy of a slovenly enterprise known throughout the trade as "identifying." He is bound by professional convention to oppose student involvement with the text, "identification with the hero," and the like. The student may "identify," God forgive him, on his own time, but please to keep the muck of your life out of my classroom. Yet, simultaneously, the teacher is telling himself that *of course* he's concerned with the relation between literature and life. But there is a "field" to be "covered," isn't there? We do have a discipline, a design to be held in view? And "they" do have to be shown what good books and spelling really are, do they not?

English emasculated

For an inkling of the meaning of the situation I describe, I believe you have only to consider for a minute what the teaching life of men in other fields would be, were they placed in a relation to their subject comparable to that of many present-day English teachers. The professor of chemistry would be a professor of test-tubes, the professor of fine arts would be a commentator on paint and brushes, the physicist would be an authority on bouncing balls. Heat, light, electricity, organic compounds, energy in the one case, images of man and God and nature in the other—these would vanish as matters of inquiry, if an emasculation comparable to the emasculation of English were accomplished elsewhere. In place of a subject, an area of life, a portion of nature, or existence, the disciplines would be empty—contentless, dimensionless, insubstantial.

How much can be said about English before it was emptied of content? (I am still setting forth assumptions, and it will be over in a moment.) What is its lost dimension, its lost substance? The substance of English is dramatic and presentational, a fullness, an embodiment, a wholeness, not an isolate or a swiftly nameable concentrate: not energy, not heat. But, as already indicated, a way toward a true sense of this subject does exist—one that leads through

negatives. "English" is not centrally about the difference between good books and bad. It is not centrally about poetics, metrics, mysteries of versification, or the study of balance and antithesis in the Ciceronian sentence. It is not centrally about the history of literature, not centrally about changes in moral and philosophical systems as these can be deduced from abstracts of selected Great Works. Still more negatives: the English classroom is not primarily the place where students learn of the majesty of Shakespeare and alas for Beaumont and Fletcher. It is not primarily the place where students learn to talk about the structure of a poem or about the logic of the octave and sestet, or about the relation between the narrator and author and speaker and mock-speaker and reader and mock-reader of the poem. It is not primarily the place where students learn to mind their proper manners at the spelling table or to expand their vocabulary or to write Correct like nice folks. It is not a finishing school, not a laff riot with a "swinging prof," not an archeological site.

The human experience

It is the place—there is no other in most schools—the place wherein the chief matters of concern are particulars of humanness—individual human feeling, human response, and human time, as these can be known through the written expression (at many literary levels) of men living and dead, and as they can be discovered by student writers seeking through words to name and compose and grasp their own experience. English in sum is about my distinctness and the distinctness of other human beings. Its function, like that of some books called great, is to provide an arena in which the separate man, the single ego, can strive at once to know the world through art, to know what if anything he uniquely is, and what some brothers uniquely are. The instruments employed are the imagination, the intellect, and texts or events that rouse the former to life. And, to repeat, the goal is not to know dates and authors and how to spell *recommend*; it is to expand the areas of the human world—areas that would not exist but for art—with which individual man can feel solidarity and coextensiveness.

So much for rough assumptions and opinions about where we are. If they are obnoxious opinions, they aren't so because held by an art-baiter. Their root is the simple sense that the teaching of writing and reading can become an enclosed, sealed-off enterprise in danger of being locked into terms of discourse which, whether identified as those dominantly of historicism, aestheticism, professionalism, or technicism, are too unrelentingly self-referring to be worth praise.

I come now to my examples, intending to show what I complain against is visible in public reality.

Late last summer at Hanover, New Hampshire, some forty or fifty English professors from England, America, and Canada sat together, under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation, the National Council of English teachers, and MLA to attempt to arrive at some good and just assumptions about English teaching. After a week or so of attitudinizing and speechmaking, people came to realize that they were being self-indulgent. The way to establish what one felt about teaching was to do some teaching, [illegible] before the other. So a committee chose a poem; our group was divided into classes of six or seven, and we were asked to brood about the chosen poem and then to suggest an age level or grade for which the poem seemed particularly suitable. With this grade in mind, we were to speak to: "What objectives would you hope to move towards in your classroom handling of the poem, what methods and approaches would you use?"

Ornamental concerns

The Hanover crowd was not undistinguished, by and large; some citizens were well known throughout the profession. But the episode in question was, in my view, a disaster. Talk about classroom objectives degenerated almost instantly into rancorous dispute about Taste. How good was the poem? "I hate it." "It's bad Hardy, ekshly." (I shall come in a moment to "the poem itself;" the paradigm is what matters here.) "Don't you think something a *little* better could have been found? I mean, can't he *tell* the difference?" etc. Next: a question about the relation be-

tween the poem and the genre, dramatic monologue: What other poems might be put into the equation? Next: Would the poem be read in class, when, by whom, how? So there were demonstration readings, and it was agreed by the group that two of our number read well. But the question of the uses of the poem, the question how to place it in the classroom, how to set up vital relations between the student and these lines: Those matters seemed more or less without interest. Here was a bit of poetry which, like many another bit of poetry, would strike an inexperienced reader as "clipped out" from somewhere, torn from context, quite mystifying at first glance, a kind of uninvited guest, all unexpected. Yet, even the probable surprise of the poem to inexperienced students wasn't enough to shake the discussants out of the vacuum of taste and genre talk. Before I come back to the poem itself and make a commitment about proper classroom objectives, let me deal, in similar paradigmatic manner, with a classroom situation involving writing.

We are at the same conference. A successful high school English teacher from Cheyenne, Wyoming, presents a paper about grading compositions—in particular, about how to teach young people to revise. The teacher's exhibit is a paper written on the theme of "an important decision." The answer in the unrevised and revised theme that we are asked to consider draws on an uncommon experience from the world of sport. It is, at bottom, a world not only of sport but of cruelty—cruelty which the student, because of his closeness to a local culture, is unaware of. The instructor, calling for revision, directs his energies not to the task of awakening the student's consciousness to the cruelty of which he is oblivious; instead he deals with the problem as one of "technique," and calls for more colorful, precise "details"; as though the use of writing isn't to seek deeper comprehension of experience but to tart up "theme topics" with Timese.

The third voice

But, of course, from this distance the rights and wrongs

of both episodes aren't visible. Let me first quote the poem just mentioned, Hardy's "The Man He Killed."*

What should one *care* about when one is teaching this poem? I must change the question quickly in order to fit it to my classroom, for I think it is probably a mistake to begin flatly with any poem, to begin any class as though the prime aim were to "do justice to the poem." I would say that the teacher does well to remind himself that the poem is the third voice in the room, and that he himself is not merely the servant of the poem, but the defender, interpreter, even perhaps celebrator, of the life and world of feeling. Saying it again: Only in his classroom are details of immediate, living, individual thought and feeling and response legitimate areas of interest and speculation. Well and good if he wants to say to himself: How can I show

*Reprinted from *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* by permission of The Trustees of the Hardy Estate, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, and The Macmillan Company, New York.

the organization of this poem? But he should add other words in the line of self-exhortation. He should remind himself that most men don't know what they feel, hence sometimes feel nothing; and the literature teacher and the writing teacher are men whose gifts and sensitivities are means by which others can be awakened to contrarieties and puzzles of ordinary response. The map of human relations and feelings known to the young is all Sahara usually; few marks on it except what the culture (or the rebel-culture) scratches—love of parents or hatred, pride in nation, pride in self, ambition, dutifulness, loyalty, unfocused cynicism. Flat counters, simplicities, socializing abstractions. Again and again, the work of imaginative literature populates the desert spaces, fills the blank tracts with probabilities of feeling.

At an interesting, though not primary level, "The Man He Killed" is a poem about meetings, about strangers encountering each other, establishing ways of acting toward each other, controlling the terms on which they will be known. But the poem is first of all a small rendering of a single man's experience of fathoming for himself the relation between bits of his own behavior and feelings, and the grand impassive concerns of the machine of is-ness beyond him—state, nation, army. Hardy is always brilliant at imagining and revealing the responses of relatively simple minds to enormous events or issues. As John Wain recently noted, Hardy's eye looks straight enough into homely, normal, workaday reactions to permit his reader to see how little truth there is in the notion that homely, normal, workaday reactions truly exist. A teacher with ability to retain control of his class while moving freely from conversation to text and back to conversation might decently and honorably begin with a question about how we place ourselves in relation to the state or nation. Do you ever have a citizen-feeling? When? Can you say much about it? Describe it? The Lincoln Memorial at night? Leaving New York harbor, returning? Watching an Inauguration on TV? What is it like to be a loyal citizen, do you think? What are the elements of this experience? Have you ever been in a quandary about where you are in relation to an Official

Policy, a Public Decision, the Country itself? "This is my country"—how much ownership do you feel in the "my"?

Moving to consciousness

I would think a teacher beginning this way would want to turn away after five or ten minutes, proposing a poem as another voice in this conversation. There need not be endless agonizing about a perfect reading, or about the goodness or badness of the poem. Neither item matters as much as the opportunity to move with young minds to consciousness of how people go about making a sense of themselves as related in significant ways to the public weal, public choices, issues, wars.

But we won't move at all, will we, if we fail to do justice to the third stanza, sounding it as it should be sounded. More questions here. Shall we read it as though the man were answering confidently? No? Why so? Why is he not confident? How does he answer? You might say, with a sort of faintly over-acted concentration, frowning bemused over-acted cudgeling of brains, "I am taking this problem very seriously, because I happen to be (within my limits—and do not think I'm without pride, I've got as much of that as the next man!) a serious, independent, thoughtful person." The questions here seem to point us not only at the man's way of working out a quandary, but at the art of the poem as well. For a great part of the latter does, after all, lie in the strained turning of the lines to follow simple hesitation and pauses on to the release of a wry, hand-lifted shrug. The movement of the words does indeed register the movement of a mind, a simple man seeming to think it out, seeming to "work something out for himself."

But we must get to the central point. How does the man "solve" this problem? Does he solve it? Here is somebody trying to fathom a public mystery: Why do I shoot and kill another man, under the sponsorship of the state? What does this fathoming amount to? Well, it amounts to a gesture and a tag: Life is paradoxical, "quaint and curious." The man meets his need by acting in a certain way. By doing a kind of homely philosophical turn. By making a kind of

profundum-sound. By lifting a shoulder in a manner that says, We're not so dumb, y'know. We at least know we don't know anything and when we say that, we at least know a lot more than your super-educated blokes—them what thinks they know bloody well everything.

Lingering within mystery

How shall we "finish" our class? Perhaps not with homage to a poem. We may trail off asking whether, now that we are all familiar with the way in which questions don't get answers, we ourselves will be less inclined to accept our own pseudo-answers, our own postures of reconciliation, etc. Are we not protected? Will we know enough to press on to "real" answers? Why? Why not? And then at the end, what will the teacher tell himself? All I did today "in English" was show forth a little of the manner in which human beings face their puzzles, bridge the gap between their slim certainties and the complicated rationale of events, bridge it by accepting their socially imposed obligation to behave as though everything does finally add up. I have asked some questions that might oblige somebody, at some future moment when he is saying: Well, we all know life is a racket—or a paradox—or a joke—that might oblige such a man to stay a minute longer inside the mystery, instead of cutting it off with the word "paradox."

And, I say defensively, in these actions, I haven't much defaced the poem. The stillness in Hardy's stanzas, the part of the organization where for an instant the poem becomes quite good, is the moment at which the poem bodies forth in a speech rhythm a certain expressive curve of hesitation, followed by release toward "comprehension." The achievement of the poem is to give formed substance to a human effort to comprehend what is beyond comprehension. The triviality the mind offers in such efforts is carried in the silly-rote patness of the sounds—foe, so, foe, though. The small messy cluster of rhymes introduces words as words into the equation at just the instant when the man is discovering a word as a word—*foe* is "just a word," somebody's taught word. Just a foe, just so. Right. Foe's the

right word. It is "right" because there is no way to move out of the suspension of thought in cliché, empty sound, or half-smiling gestures of reconciliation.

But we are not teaching the poem in order to celebrate a snippet of craft. No, no more than we are teaching it in deference to "life" or to "experience." Our deference is to the formed substance that the poem has made—the reality of one single man's particular way at a particular time with a particular companion of masking incomprehension as "understanding of a sort," the sense of what it is like to inhabit the skin of someone at the moment when he behaves as though he believes he "understands" what in truth is beyond his power of understanding. Our class hasn't precisely been "taught a poem." It has been in a conversation about understanding and blindness; and while the best voice in the conversations is the poem's voice, it is that only because *we* took it in, we showed ourselves what it created and how that creation comments on gestures of our own. And (one last point here), the teacher's art, if the conversation comes to anything, doesn't lie in his mastery of the poem alone. It lies in his or her approach to the great vision of the humanistic investigator found in Kierkegaard's *Concept of Dread:*

> . . . just as the psychological investigator must possess a greater suppleness than a tightrope walker, so that he can install himself within men's minds and imitate their dispositions: just as his taciturnity during periods of intimacy must be to some degree seductive and passionate, so that reserve can enjoy stealing forth, in this artificially achieved atmosphere of being quietly unnoticed, in order to feel relief, as it were in monologue: so he must have poetic originality within his soul, so as to be able to construct totality and orderliness from what is presented by the individuum [student or poet, I want to add] only in a condition of dismemberment and irregularity.

Bullriding

Less needs to be said about the other instance I cited: the writing episode. I want only to say that it doesn't seem to me that the good teacher of writing can see himself as a tutor in the craft of adding details, color, vividness, etc. His obligation is to move the student closer to the thing, to find the

talk that will create a subject for the student, create a need for utterance, an eagerness to name a truth beyond the truth begun with. Here is the original paragraph which the Cheyenne teacher read to us. It is about bullriding:

> I had been riding bulls for 2 summers and wasn't doing too bad at it, when I was chased up a fence by a bull in Thermoplis. This didn't seem to affect me and I went right on riding; however, in Douglas this summer I rode a bull, and bucked off; and the bull came at me, hit me, then tried to bury me. After that I swore I wouldn't ride bulls again. In the same rodeo my buddy was riding a bareback horse and he fell under it getting kicked several times. Then I swore I would never ride horses or bulls again.

And here is the revision, produced after the teacher asked for more details.

> The day was on the chilly side. The sky was overcast and the wind was strong. Most contestants wore jackets when not up. Bull riding was the first event, and I was second out on a good spinning bull named Corkscrew. He was a big blue-grey brama with long horns protruding from his head like his big sagging ears.
>
> I nodded my head and the chute gate sprang open, and I then knew that this was going to be no picnic. He jumped high and began spinning to the left as if he was going to screw himself into the ground. I was just getting with the spinning bucks when he ducked out from under me, throwing me hard on my left shoulder. As I was rolling over from the force of the fall my eyes caught the huge animal throwing up dirt with his front feet, preparing to charge. I jumped to my feet and didn't waste any time getting to the fence, but my ton and a half friend was right on my tail. His head was lowered and snot was streaming out of his reddened nostril.

The snot in the nostril does not, I think, change the bull. It is one more bit of objective Timese, one more "balding" or "blue-eyed" or whatever, one more pretense that the viewer does not affect the object viewed. The right question to ask the bullrider was, perhaps: What about the canvas strips wrenched up under the animal? Is there any pain here? Terror? Have you thought about why the animal bucks? Why does the animal not shriek? Why do we do this to them? Can you imagine this creature as "in pain?" Why do you yourself and I myself not care very greatly about it? Here is a needless affliction of torment—a creature

backing, rocking, tearing itself apart in air—and we are oblivious to the shrieking in these motions. Why so?

Questions of this sort seem to me to be analogous to the questions I wish to ask about the poem. They seek to remake a situation for the reader and the writer; they seek to shift the relation between the writer and the subject, edging him closer to the thing, pressing for the human response.

Someone tolerant of looseness but, nevertheless, troubled by all this asks: What makes you believe every teacher doesn't do exactly what you've just been talking about? I would instance, in answer, the papers I have read in the bound volumes of the last few Yale conferences of English teachers; I see no point in quoting passages, and I do not mean to set up against literary criticism, but these papers are presented as aids to teachers, and they seem to me by and large to speak to English teaching in different terms from those just set forth. And then, too, there are the episodes I cited, two among scores, from a recent and reputable international conference of teachers of English.

Study the thing

Someone else may ask: How could teachers with a subject as exhilarating in its contemplation as English let it slip from their hands? Especially when so many great voices, not mere doctors of philosophy like you, Professor D., have said loud and bold: study the *thing*. (Do not talk to me of artistry: Van Gogh. Tell me about the mudbank over there. Or Turgenev: If you want to know my stories, then know my *things*. "All the images rose up before me as things": Coleridge.) Why should things—objects, feelings, situations—not stand in better with English teachers than they do? Nothing short of a book suffices to tell that story. There are enormously complicated community pressures toward innocuousness and toward a bootless "mastery of mechanics" (the citizen with no ideas, no vision of himself worth punctuating, but with a clear grasp of "punctuation mechanics" is the desiderated product). And, there are a number of intellectual influences that are scarcely less im-

portant. One of these is the advent of special traditions of professionalism among literary men and teachers—first, the cult of historical research, later, the cult of design and structure. Another is the powerful thrust (coming partly through the Symbolist aesthetic) toward dismissal of the referential nature of works of literary art: The poem became a set of relations within itself, a fascinating clockworks that told no time. For different reasons, the student composition had already become something analogous—a lesson in the mastery of a particular progression of paragraphs, rather than a raid on the unexpressed. Still another distraction was the noisy, pointless dispute between historicists and new critics—an argument in which both parties were in agreement on a fundamental principle: Students should not be encouraged to study poems and novels as discoveries or clarifications or embodiments of life itself. (The teacher who chose up sides in this dispute had the illusion of opting for something "concrete"; in fact, he merely took on another abstraction.) There is, in addition, the tendency of some literary men of positivistic cast to aspire to the condition of scientist; in other words, clear out the human junk. Above everything, perhaps, there is the widespread and ignorant conviction that only the mindless can speak with interest about details of feeling. But, what person who has ever sought intensely and responsibly to know his own feelings in a particular situation could accept an account of that enterprise as intellectually unchallenging? The surest proof of the excruciating difficulty of achieving consciousness of one's own or another's responses is the rarity of effort toward that end. It is much easier to settle for public cant and private self-deception than to reach for the innerness of a man.

But the present need, as I said at the start, isn't for etiological surveys. Neither is it for long ponderings on the possibility that teaching which recovers a decent interest in the life embodied and represented in works of literary art (and in student composition) will lead to loss of taste, critical inexactitude, ignorance of our literary heritage, dumbness before the wonder of language. (The love of a melody cannot be lessened by attention to what the melody

expresses, the pieces of life set in order and related one to the next within the tune.) Nor is it useful to agonize about the possibility that to deal with substantive matters to the English classroom means decreasing the distance between teacher and student and accepting, as a normal classroom event, face-to-face, abrasive encounters of assumptions, doubts, and longings.

For the truth is that the gains that could come from releasing the English teacher and student into the living world of their subject hugely outweigh any possible losses. These gains can even be fairly expressed in terms of significant national interests. It is the free man's awareness of himself as possessing a distinct life of feeling, a singularity of response, an individual tendency of time, that alone gives meaning and relish to the idea of freedom. And, in the contemporary state, there are massive forces ranged against every small encouragement and stimulation of that awareness, forces blandly denying the dream of individuality and the dream of self-knowledge. The English classroom is, ideally, the place where the latter dream is set under scrutiny, understood, valued, and interpreted. To reduce the classroom to a lesser place, to evade the substance of English in the name of stylistics, correctness, acquaintance with the classics, taste tests, colorful composition, is therefore to deny youth a good defense against the fate of mass men.

Not for salvation alone

What is being said here can be mocked, I must admit now at the end, as amounting to a merely therapeutic conception of the study of literature and composition. But there is nothing on earth, after all, that cannot be defaced with a *merely*. The argument that the right course for English studies or humanities courses is one that prizes the poem and the play as windows opening on a livingness that would otherwise be unseen and dead to the human eye, need not run into extravagance. There is no implicit claim that any man can be "saved" simply by such views and visions, simply by talking about his own relation to the

state before meeting a poem embodying perplexities in that relation, simply by being pressed to consider the torment of the bull as well as the "need for lively detail." The argument holds only that the teacher and student who speak together of the things that books make palpable, who tell each other what they see and why they believe or disbelieve their eyes, can awaken in each other a stronger consciousness of humanness than that issuing either from an absorption in metrics or design or the hierarchy of taste. Is it not a fact that whatever serves the interest of that consciousness—the interest of a man's awareness of the immediacy of himself—also serves the highest interests of the highest art as well?

GLEANINGS FROM THE DARTMOUTH DISCUSSIONS

The individual participants, study groups, and working parties that comprised the Anglo-American Seminar at Dartmouth College had much to say concerning the reading and study of literature in our schools. Among the more provocative assertions were some that demand careful consideration by those concerned with the teaching of English. The following selection presents a sampling of statements on general important topics. The sampling is offered as an indication of the vitality and range of the Dartmouth discussions.

ON THE FOCUS OF LITERARY STUDY

The direct study of literary criticism, literary history, or critical theory does not seem necessary in the elementary and secondary school, nor do courses like "The History of American Literature," "English Literature," or "World Literature," which are patterned on college models.

On the other hand, to understand a literary work and to approach the experience that it offers, a student may very often need extrinsic information about, for example, the historical or cultural setting in which a work was written, or about the life, the thought, the sensibility of its author.

The teacher should be able to judge how much such information is necessary in any given case, considering the particular needs of the students confronting him. It follows, therefore, that his education should train him to make such judgments and equip him with the information to frame and support his teaching.

—Working Party Number One

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Sometimes students should read literature in the context provided by knowledge about the author and his other works, the period in which he wrote, and his relation to other writers, but such knowledge contributes only a little towards a full understanding of a literary work.

—Working Party Number Two

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To some degree a child's response to what he reads contains from the beginning a reaction for or against, a decision to accept or reject; but until well on into adolescence these reactions are intuitive, impermanent, and intensely personal. What I have in mind is a gradual development of a stable core of more sustained discriminations around which new judgments come to be organized, together with a readiness to examine in a more distanced and thoughtful way the grounds on which it may be possible to justify such judgments to others. From this view the essential element in critical reading is its evaluative aspect; the acquisition of a critical terminology, a vocabulary for analysis, has importance not as an end in itself, but as a means towards the objectively shared comparison of responses which must always in the last analysis be personal if they are to be anything at all. The stage at which critical assessment can enter explicitly into the practice of the classroom will need careful discussion; there is such disagreement here and, perhaps, a certain amount of muddled thinking.

—Frank Whitehead

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We can probably all agree that conscious awareness of formal characteristics (e.g., rhythm, imagery, dramatic

irony, narrative point-of-view) should play some part in a student's literary education, at any rate at the older ages and more advanced levels of study. From the British standpoint what may well be in dispute is the magnitude of the contribution that can be made by such awareness to the reader's ability to respond fully and appropriately to any specific literary work. Many British teachers certainly believe that for younger and for less able pupils conscious direction toward such issues can be a hindrance and a distraction because it seemingly offers them a relatively painless alternative to the task of reading the novel, poem, or play as such. In a rather similar way, the great disadvantage of emphasizing "basic recurring themes" is that it leads our attention away from the unique work of literature towards features which, when abstracted from it, can be seen to link it, in one way or another, with other works. This seems to be calculated to produce knowledge "about" literature (probably spurious knowledge at that) rather than a capacity to read works of literature and respond to them; it is surely incompatible with our shared conviction that the value of literature as a maturer of humanity is the sum of a continuous experiencing of books. At its worst, this approach will foster the disposition to see, for example, novels not as individual and self-contained works of art (each with its own reasons for being so and not otherwise) but as variant and interchangeable treatments of "a relatively limited number of human plights." Nor does it seem that anything valuable has been achieved when the student has been taught to perceive a resemblance between the plot structure of a Shakespearean comedy and that of a "battered television movie," or between the character of Anna in *The King and I* and Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Wonderland*. What one has to ask is "Do these perceptions enable him to take anything more from his reading of Shakespeare or Carroll?" and the answer, on the most charitable interpretation, can only be "Precious little."

—Frank Whitehead

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There are at present considerable differences about the

knowledge of literature to be expected from students. On the one hand there are those who favour the study of genre, literary forms, chronological arrangement. Others believe that information about literature is not important enough for any time to be given to it, that chronology is an irrelevant survival of an outworn approach, and that a concern with poetic technique impedes a sensitive response. Dr. Squire's view—"Our literature programs tend to place far too little attention to the *close* reading of literary texts, far too much on superficial coverage and talking *about* texts"[6]—is closely paralleled by a representative English statement:

> To enjoy a poem that mentions "fruit of Jaffa" it is necessary to know that Jaffa grows oranges; it is irrelevant to be told of Richard I or the politics of Israel . . . . school texts . . . become the refuse-tips of scholarship, where literature is buried beneath a slag-heap of useless knowledge about variant readings, classical allusions and the rest. Talk about an author's life or his social background may be helpful, but we should not make a habit of it.[7]

Whether or not courses based on chronology or technique are survivals from an age when all education was academic and are kept there by an interest in "scholarship" rather than in education we cannot be sure, but we can be certain that they sometimes lead to bad choices and unprofitable treatment. Principles of selection should be thought out. What we choose for children should be enjoyable and interesting to them; we badly need some more studies of children's preferences and the bringing up-to-date of such books as A. J. Jenkinson's *What Do Girls and Boys Read?* (Until then there are some very satisfactory pages in *The Disappearing Dais.*[8]) Children seek among other things enlargement of experience and compensation for the inadequacies and troubles of their own lives. We shall therefore look for

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[6] James R. Squire, "A School for All Seasons," *English Journal*, LV (March 1966), 187.

[7] Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters, *The Teaching of English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

[8] Frank Whitehead, *The Disappearing Dais: A Study of the Principles and Practices of English Teaching* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966).

books that will extend the capacity of experience, "an enlargement and refinement of that imaginative sympathy through which we gain an increased grasp of the realities of human living and a deeper insight into the way in which human beings... think and feel and believe and affect one another" (*The Disappearing Dais*). If we do think out such principles, some of the current book lists and recommendations will have to be severely weeded. Why do we go on including *Paradise Lost, She Stoops to Conquer, School for Scandal, Silas Marner, Lord of the Flies?* Merely because they have always been there or because other people list them. It is suggested that, for different reasons, all these books are unsuited to the age groups for which they are commonly prescribed. *Freedom and Discipline in English*[9] considered the possibility of a canon of literary works but preferred the consensus of opinion to be found in good English departments—a view which would be widely accepted in England, where the catering for what unthinking teachers believe to be children's tastes has allowed the introduction of a great deal of rubbish. The recommendation of the National Study of High School English is extremely important: "Five hundred appropriate titles for student reading in every classroom—a standard which our observation suggests may well lead to an average expectation that young people read twenty or twenty-five books a semester rather than the more usual, paltry four or five."[10] Greater library use and more classroom reading are also indicated.

Students should leave school with skill in reading that will enable them to understand more than the mere sense of a piece of writing. We shall expect them to distinguish between the referential and emotive use of words, but without these technical terms. "The mood, feelings and emotions expressed or implied, the writer's and speaker's general intentions, and their sometimes changing attitudes to their

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[9] Commission on English, *Freedom and Discipline in English* (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1964).

[10] James R. Squire and Roger K. Applebee, *High School English Instruction Today: The National Study of High School English Programs* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968).

readers or audience are all indicated through language."[11] They should be able to approach different kinds of writing, including poetry, in the appropriate way.

Freedom and Discipline in English goes further and suggests that the student's approach should be critical and enable him to assess the quality of his reading. "How good is it? Even with his relatively limited background, the student can make a start toward answering this question. . . . He will not . . . establish a ladder of excellence beyond dispute, but he will learn to discriminate on reliable grounds and he will learn to respect the act of discrimination" (p. 76). Frank Whitehead in his chapter on "Reading and Literature" enlarges on the need for training a critical attitude and considers the dangers and possibilities. He regrets that in England most students leave school before they are mature enough to profit from the kind of work he desiderates. However, he concludes—and his view is shared by very many teachers and even by examining boards—that some elementary critical work can be attempted with many students of about fifteen onwards on such material as advertisements and the press (cf. *The Disappearing Dais,* pp. 80-82).

—Denys Thompson

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New Criticism continues to be a major force in the universities, in the literary magazines and professional journals, and in the high school curriculum. This emphasis on the formal aspects of literature protects us against potentially undisciplined uses of literature—the nationalistic and solipsistic vagaries we have seen in the past—but it can severely narrow the student's reading experience. Practical criticism can elevate his reading habits, but it should not stop at the level of executive techniques that is somewhere short of the major meanings form can empower in him. A full reading of a great work of literature should give him a sense of actuality almost outside form itself; the imaginative act required involves the process of literal belief and its poetic suspension, the problem of distance—being "out far and in deep"—and all the equilibrium between subjective

[11] National Association for the Teaching of English, *Criteria for Success in English* (Reading, England: NATE, n.d.), p. 12.

experience and communal form. In reading the "poem itself" the student encounters a structure which reveals the mood of the speaker, the mind of the author and, to some degree, the mind of the culture; if he reads well, he will enhance his understanding of patterns in art and in life and he may experience occasions when he can even get "the fly out of the flybottle."

—Albert Lavin

ON LITERATURE AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Literature—especially poetry—is often suspect to the common man, at least in the United States. He regards it as effete, if not effeminate. But if he is willing to put up with the presence of literature in the curriculum studied by his children, it is often because he sees it as a convenient way of inculcating attitudes and values that he approves of—a belief in orthodox social philosophy and moral standards, or merely the stock responses to flag, home, and mother.

—Albert Kitzhaber

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The area in which language operates in English lessons is the area of personal experience, the area involving relations with other people, with the identity of the individual, with the relation between ego and environment, or however it is phrased. All personal experience, moreover, has a concomitant *feeling*, a feeling which socially derived bodies of fact want to exclude, at least from their end results. Personal experience as it operates through language in the English class thus has a quality not to be found in other areas of the curriculum. We could, like the sociologist, anthropologist, or psychologist, dig out of this area certain socially derived bodies of fact, but we choose to operate by another method, what I call the spectator role, not the participant role. In other words, we use literature. The themes of literature are the human themes; they are the relationships between man and his environment, those in

which emotion is part of what is afoot. Thus it is here that all knowledge can come together for the individual.

—James Britton

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Recognition that English activities should be designed to enable the pupil through language to represent internally those experiences that are of moment to him implies that much of the talking, listening, writing, and reading is to be focused—at least initially—upon personal experience, and that when an English lesson is at first sight concerned with matters within another discipline (such as Civics), the orientation is toward language, rather than towards objective study, thus enabling the pupil to explore his own reaction and attitude to the topic. We see the reading of literature as operational, in that each reader must himself recreate what he reads. We reject the idea of literature as a content which can be "handed over" to the pupils, and emphasize instead the idea of literature as contributing to the sensitivity and responsibility with which individuals live through language.

—Working Party Number One

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Insight is gained by contemplation and from sympathetic contact with others. But the creative arts are one major source of insight into our inward problems, and of those some of the most important are poetry and imaginative fiction, because word-art uses the same language in which we think, conduct relationships, and deal with practical affairs. Poetic exploration should be at the centre of English teaching, and a point at which a child's natural creative urge for symbolisation should meet that of the adult poet: the civilisation beginning anew in each child should meet the inheritance of the best in civilisation.

—David Holbrook

. . .

Considered as perennial patterns of human behavior which

recur in evershifting historical variations, the archetypal images of experience can amplify the student's power to explain his own world, to bridge its inner and outer dimensions. Much of the appeal in myth derives from the fears and fantasies every child experiences, as part of the way he defines himself. Literature is perhaps one of the best ways we have of coping with the tensions of identity, those problems of the "me and the not me"; the agonies of growth are made bearable, even productive, through the vicarious enactment of them in the child who hears and reads nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and myths.

—Study Group Number Six

. . .

In a primary school "the children hear a story of poetry daily, so that their language experience is a rich one," and in a secondary school the pupils "must constantly be stimulated with varied examples of literature chosen by the teacher." The emphasis is a healthy one, because the experience of life that literature provides enables a child to digest new thoughts, take in new feelings, and adopt new attitudes. For, as Richard Hoggart writes, "poetic, metaphoric, intuitive understanding *is* a form of knowledge although it cannot be objectively measured... its validity depends on the imaginative power of the author ('imagination' includes penetration, complexity, honesty) and on our capacity as readers to test it against our own sense of experience."[12]

—Denys Thompson

ON HISTORICAL INFLUENCES IN ENGLISH TEACHING

So far as English [in the early part of the century] was concerned, the "varied needs" could easily be defined in more or less moral terms, generally connected with growth in

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[12]Richard Hoggart, "Literature and Society," *The American Scholar*, XXXVI (Spring 1966).

thinking, taste, or judgment. The "purpose of educating the children of the many for life and life's occupations" could be defined as the inculcation of "skill in thinking, his ideals, right habits of conduct, healthy interests, and sensitiveness to the beautiful." That was James Hosic, and no doubt he easily found his way to saying:

> Broadly speaking it should be the purpose of every English teacher, first, to quicken the spirit and kindle the mind and imagination of his pupils, and to develop habits of weighing and judging human conduct with the hopes of leading them to higher living; second, to supply the pupils with an effective tool for use in their future private and public life—i.e., to give them the best command of language which, under the circumstances, can be given them.[13]

The effects of this method can be seen in all English teaching, but nowhere more distinctly than in the handling of literary works, which is hardly unexpected, since, as was said by one of the reformers, "literature is especially rich in ethical values." It should be said that, for some, literature with all its moral values could still be less important than "reading related to the major interests and practical pursuits of everyday life." But I think it is safe to say that for most English teachers most of the time the test of a literary work is what is known as "the maturity of the idea" that it "presents." Surely most teachers would feel and would say with pride:

> Great literature raises the problems and questions that have perplexed man through all history: for example, the relations between power and responsibility or the problem of undeserved human suffering. It presents the solutions and answers of the greatest minds the world has known. If the solutions and answers are not complete, they are the best we have. . . .
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> As we read imaginative literature in English classes, we not only

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[13] James F. Hosic, *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1917), pp. 20, 26; *Preliminary Statements by Chairmen of Committees of the Commission of the National Education Association on the Reorganization of Secondary Education* (Washington: GPO, 1913), p. 11. The statement is signed by Hosic.

> study the great ideas of Western men; we also share the feelings of *all* people in *all* times.[14]

"All" is a mighty big word; and I myself find it a little hard to understand how such cultural uniformitarianism can be accommodated to any strong interest in the "varying backgrounds, needs, and interests" of students.

The early Commission's view of literature as a means of ethical improvement was supported by what I take to have been a psychological principle, that "stimulation of the imaginative and emotional faculties of the pupil is mainly dependent upon inducing him to identify himself in thought with the writer and (in narrative) with the characters."[15] From this comes the leading (that is, without answer) question designed to promote discussion. Its type is "What do you think of_____?" or "Do you think that_____should have_____?" or "What would you have done if you had been_____?" or to take a real one: "Why do we admire Brutus in spite of his failure more than Mark Antony, the successful?" The value of such questions is, of course, precisely that they do not have answers, and indeed aren't even real questions. In addition, they transfer attention from the comparative certainties of works to the expected uncertainties in responses from the group. They allow for different responses (not answers) which may be more or less complex, more or less mature. Thus together the questions and the responses provide occasion for observation of growth. That they lead to no experience of comprehending a work of art is of no matter. They demonstrate the fact of individual differences; that is enough.

—Wallace Douglas

ON THE SELECTION OF LITERARY WORKS

There is a whole range of other questions. What weight should be given to the student's own preferences in selecting

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[14] Dora V. Smith, "The Children's Literary Heritage," *Elementary English*, XXXX (November 1964), 715, and *The Students' Right to Read* (Champaign: NCTE, 1962), p. 11.

[15] Hosic, *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*, p. 47.

works to be studied in a literature curriculum? Should it be assumed that the student cannot be interested in anything that he does not already find interesting? Some educational theorists have so argued in the past. Or is Robert B. Heilman right when he says that "The idea that knowledge follows interest is a scandalous half-truth," and that "it is a better-than-half-truth that *interest follows knowledge*"?[16] Should difficulties caused by older forms of the language be a reason for weighting the curriculum with works from the last half-century? Or should an effort be made to teach Shakespeare and Milton, if not Spenser and Chaucer, to most children before they graduate or reach school-leaving age? Should the literature curriculum be confined to *belles lettres?* Or should it include both discursive prose and a selection of great speeches from the literature of rhetoric—Burke on conciliation with America, Lincoln's Second Inaugural, Churchill on Dunkirk? If stage drama is a proper concern of the literature curriculum, what about television drama and the film, which after all provide the overwhelming part of most children's experience?

—Albert Kitzhaber

. . .

The primary aim of literary study is not only ability but a lasting desire to read books. For the sake of both proficiency and pleasure the student should be able to understand implied as well as surface meanings, to make critical judgments as a basis for choice in his own reading, to recognize the values presented in literature, and to relate them to his own attitudes and values. He should be familiar with the "reservoir" literature that forms a common background for our culture (classical mythology, European folk and fairy tales, Arthurian legends, the Bible, etc.), with a range of selections from English and American literature and with some from other literatures in good translation. So far as possible he should have some "time sense" —not a detailed, lifeless knowledge of names and dates, but an

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[16]Robert B. Heilman, "Literature and Growing Up," *English Journal*, XLV (September 1956), 310.

imaginative sense of the past. Today he should also be acquainted more discriminately with media of expression other than the book—moving pictures, radio, television—and have some initial awareness and enjoyment of them as sources of aesthetic experience. Disagreement arises over how much knowledge he should have of literary forms and initial vocabulary, but at least he should have some experience with the diverse forms and with talk about them.

—Working Party Number One

ON THE SEQUENCE OF LITERARY STUDY

Probably all literary devices and stylistic features can be appreciated, in their simpler forms, at the earliest stages of reading or listening to stories. . . . At later stages children can be led to discover the precision with which the writer conveys experience through the verbal organization of his writing, and they can sometimes be aided in this by an explicit discussion of literary forms, techniques, and devices, though they may achieve the essential literary response without it.

—Working Party Number Two

. . .

Progress towards maturity in literary experience consists in an increasing range of interest, increasingly subtle discriminations within the areas of interest, increasing coherence and consistency in the systems of affective response associated with interests, and an increasing grasp of the literary resources available for conveying these discriminations and affective responses.

—Working Party Number Two

. . .

In our dealings with literature, I believe that we instinctively do, in fact, all work on the assumption that there exists in our students a developmental sequence in this area of language use just as much as in any other. Along what dimensions might it be possible to describe this se-

quence? The formal levels of linguistic growth must, of course, enter here too; in assigning books or poems to particular grades or age levels, we naturally take into account the complexity of their vocabulary and of their syntactic structures. Are there in addition particular literary devices or stylistic features which cannot be appreciated below a particular age or stage? I am inclined to doubt this. From a very early age children respond to verbal rhythm and to incremental repetition, while even the youngest listener will take delight in the dramatic irony of the wolf's replies to Red Riding Hood. It is true that figurative language can often prove an obstacle, but this seems to be the result, not of an inherent incapacity for metaphor, but rather of the limited store of associations which the young reader has available to draw upon. Certainly we should expect our pupils, as they grow older, to respond more sensitively to the literature they read and to recreate for themselves with greater accuracy and subtlety the precise patterning of experience which the writer has embodied in the verbal organization of his novel or poem; the discovery of how rewarding it may be to look again at an image, a sentence, a verse, or a paragraph to correct and amplify an inadequate or mistaken first impression is perhaps the most important lesson any student can take from our literature teaching. And to some degree, no doubt, this increasingly fine and delicate responsiveness may be helped along in its later stages by explicit discussion of what is contributed to the total meaning of a given work by some specific technique. But as I have argued elsewhere, "knowing how the writer has gained his effects" is not the same thing as "being able to experience these effects as fully as possible"; and I suspect that there are all the world over too many teachers who are ready to concentrate on teaching *about* literary forms and techniques as if this were a form of knowledge worth having for its own sake.

A more fruitful line of approach is to look at the kinds of experience which young readers can take, with benefit to themselves, from their reading of literature at different stages. There have been numerous studies in both our countries of the types of books which children of different ages

choose to read of their own free will. Admittedly, few of these studies are really up-to-date, so that we still have far too little objective knowledge about the impact of the television era upon children's reading; moreover, their finds need to be treated with some reserve, partly because of certain methodological defects and partly because it has repeatedly been shown that what children read depends more upon what is readily available to them than upon any other single factor. When their limitations have been allowed for, these studies can nevertheless provide useful guidance as to the themes and experiences which make a strong appeal to children at different stages in their development. One conclusion enforced by a number of different studies is that the younger children are, the more they are inclined to seek in their reading vicarious satisfactions of a relatively undisguised wish-fulfillment kind, obtained by a process of identification with a hero or heroine not too unlike themselves. Related to this is Friedlander's[17] (1942) opinion that children turn particularly to books which mirror the phantasies and emotional conflicts which belong to their own stage of development, and that the instinctual gratification which such books supply has the function of helping the child to deal with these inner conflicts and achieve a resolution of them. It may be suggested, then, that progress towards maturity in literary experience is partly a matter of change in the dominant themes that can be approached (there are certain ages below which we do not expect young people to appreciate Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, Wordsworth's nature poetry, or *King Lear*), and partly a matter of growth in the capacity for objective and depersonalized response.

If, however, we try to base our literature curriculum on a developmental sequence of this kind, can the attempt be reconciled with our wholly proper concern for quality and literary standards? There is a fundamental division here between two points of view: on the one hand those for whom the teacher's role is to present and make attractive "good literature," selecting, condensing, diluting, or adapting it in

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[17] Kate Friedlander, "Children's Books and Their Function in Latency and Pre-Puberty," *American Imago*, III (1942).

whatever ways are necessary to make it acceptable to his pupils; on the other hand those who see his task as that of guiding his pupils' reading in such a way that their immature likes and dislikes are gradually changed for the better. The dilemma is a real one. More than one study has revealed that in their judgment of books children are rather little influenced by literary merit and aesthetic values. Apparently, it is not so much that they are actively hostile to the qualities which cultivated adults value in literature; rather it is that they are relatively indifferent as to whether or not these qualities are present, since what they look for in their reading is the satisfaction of their own pressing emotional and instinctual needs. On the other hand, it should be remembered that these investigations of children's preferences and judgments were concerned with groups and could therefore disclose only average trends. There is a need for extended longitudinal studies of the changing tastes of individual children to establish the specific circumstances which favour improvement in the quality of young people's reading preferences. Suggestive in this context is Squire's (1964)[18] finding that readers who have become extensively involved in stories are more inclined to make comments which evaluate their literary qualities. Whichever conception of the teacher's role is adopted, it is certainly essential that his guidance should be disciplined by a sound and firm sense of values. He cannot pilot his pupils' taste towards "the good" in literature unless he has succeeded in arranging all the literary works he knows, both past and present, in a hierarchical order of value—a hierarchy, moreover, which cannot be taken on trust from any "authority," and which needs to be continually reconstructed and modified in the light of fresh personal experience. This is all the more important in an age when so many agencies outside the classroom combine to mislead the young by lending a specious prestige to inferior writers merely because they are "new" or in vogue.

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[18] James R. Squire, *The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964).

This reference to literature of the past leads me to one further dimension of growth which we should expect to find in our pupils' dealings with literature. When a young child encounters a story or poem, he reads it as something which stands on its own, a thing apart; he cannot place it in any context of social or literary history because his total experiences of stories and poems is still slender and he is too young to have any real sense of history. As our students grow older, we shall certainly want them increasingly to undertake their reading of literature "in context"—the context being that provided by knowledge about the author and his other works, about the conditions of the time in which he writes, and about his relationship to other writers. The total amount which can ever be contributed by such background knowledge to our understanding and enjoyment of a work of literature is, I believe, relatively small; nor is it such as to justify the kind of historical survey course which in Great Britain is increasingly being discarded, even at college and university level, in favour of courses which concentrate on particular periods, authors, or genres. Nevertheless, it does form part of that full understanding of literature towards which we should be moving at the highest level of study; and there is a need for careful consideration of the stages at which it becomes possible and the procedures by which it may be most effectively introduced.

—Frank Whitehead

. . .

In attempting to clarify the modes of discourse, one group suggested this model:

The "modes of discourse" roughly parallel the progression of the ways of thinking:

I	II	III	IV
Narration (with spatial ordering, or description, as adjunct)	**Typology** (exposition according to types)	**Explanation** (generalizations and examples)	**Theory** (statements about statements, statements relating statements)

The labels here are poor, but no standard terminology is

accurate, and only texts would illustrate. Of course one mode of discourse may be explicitly embedded in another (a narrative example within an explanation or a theoretical statement within a narrative). Again—and this brings in the whole fictional-actual dimension thus far undiscussed—the typological, explanatory, and theoretical may be *embodied* in narrative. The key word here is *embodied,* and it points to important relations between modes of discourse and ways of thinking. If the objects, persons, and actions of a story represent types of categories of experience, then a child telling or reading a story is in a real sense unwittingly doing what adults would do in a later, explicit mode. Again, the narrative mode of discourse may be for a while a young child's *only* mode; all his symbolic organizations must be uttered "one after another as if in a story" though the child may actually order his utterances according to centers of interest rather than by strict chronology. He will not have a sense of the decorum of mode, so that different cognitive orders may be represented in the same synpraxic chatter, the same "story," or whatever.

The interaction of ways of thinking and modes of discourse, as they develop, may be explained as follows. Before a child can conceptualize explicitly, his own mode of coherent utterance is through creating speech sequences which conform to "consciousness" sequences in a kind of one-to-one pairing of sentences and happenings. This works out in a synpraxic chatter and prattle as a blow-by-blow mirroring of what the child thinks that he and others are doing, what is going on around, what he is feeling, etc. Such speech is enmeshed in the circumstances of its own utterance, in present time and space. A sustained narrative monologue also matches speech sequence with time sequence, but a story gains over synpraxic speech in that it refers out of the present, is more disengaged from and independent of ongoing circumstances. A story is symbolically more powerful because more selective, more summary, more explicit in references. At this stage the child is not yet able to depart from chronology or the here and now of immediate attention and find an order of ideas upon which to organize his monological utterances. The result is that he must represent

several kinds of thinking or knowing in his single mode of discourse. Further development will be toward differentiating modes of discourse to match, explicitly, his implicit ways of classifying and postulating. A child's stories are often richly ambiguous—like the tales he likes to hear and read. They may be his ways of thinking and managing experience. Adults use this mode, in art, to symbolize matters that cannot be easily made explicit.

For the young child, then, narrative will serve, simultaneously or alternately, (1) to report real instances of events, (2) to create and relate categories of instances by placing in relation some typifying or metaphorical objects, persons, and actions, and (3) to "solve" problems through the movement of plot (a kind of inchoate exploration of propositional possibilities). If this theory is sound, that narrative is for the child the basic but undifferentiated way of thinking, and if a progression of narratives can be identified that contribute to differentiation, the progression might provide a valuable series of educational experiences for the child. The various narratives (and the term is meant to include all the chronological genres, plays and narrative poems as well as myths, tales, fables, etc.) may offer a continuum of cognitive and verbal growth.

Children's stories, those they hear and read, and those they make, move both in the *here-now* of understanding and the *there-then* of projection. They may mix "fact and fiction" and move back and forth among categories. In view of our model, the stages of differentiation of dominant literary interest which would lead through what is equivalent to Discursive Stages I-IV above might be: as to plots, a movement of center of interest from the episodic to the fully plotted, "necessarily entailed"; as to characters, from the flat to the round (in Forster's sense), from the vaguely suggestive to the explicitly and complexly symbolic; as to description, from the undifferentiated, "colorful" to the precisely perceived ("the stripes to the tulip"). The categories are not adequate to fiction, and the movement posited may not be accurate. These remains will serve to suggest the need to explore the possible parities between discursive and literary-fictive stages.

The gradual, oscillating evolution of Typology, Explanation, and Theory from Narrative must be left to the imagination. . . .

Comments on This Model: There seem to be some things left out or made insufficiently explicit in this model. I raise these in the form of questions rather than quarrels, but would like to say that I am not questioning system in an anarchic fashion, but would indeed suppose that there is a developmental progression in our organizing of experience.

1. As it is set out, the model seems too narrowly linear. If we believe that the human being oscillates between the here-and-now and the dream, at all stages of experience, and continues to move between these two poles, growing in the imaginative ability to take in painful inner experiences in objectified forms and other outer experiences in affecting forms, then we might ask for a presentation of Narrative which always provides the two poles, never dwelling on the literature of actuality or the literature of fantasy in an exclusive way, but mixing the forms and allowing further for the reception and creation of a narrative which united inner and outer, here-and-now and dream. I should want to have this breadth and mixture written into the model, and some of the observations on sequence of structures and modes of character would have to be modified accordingly.

2. The emphasis (though perhaps not all the implications) focuses attention on stages in the apprehension of structure and character rather than on stages in the accommodation to modes of feeling and judging. The young child rejects and accepts Narrative because it proffers certain difficulties and rewards of identification and choice, feeling and dreaming. We reject and accept because we are required to love, fear, tolerate, judge, be moved by, sympathize, recognize, organize, admit: our changing experience of literature demands movements in sympathy, empathy, externalization. We should recognize that Narrative covers many modes of experience and offers an area for the exercise, testing, and control of our imaginative capacities to tolerate ourselves and the outside world. (A place for poetry

might also be insisted on in this model, since it will in fact offer exercises on unexplained and unnamed and unhistoricized feeling, whereas fictitious narrative and drama will provide a mode of expanding our ability to feel and understand widening points of view.)

We should also make it quite clear that at every stage our literary experience will have four simultaneous stages: What the child (a) *writes*, (b) *speaks*, (c) *reads*, and (d) *is read* will offer different levels of affective and cognitive experience. A story written at the youngest age will be episodic for mechanical reasons, and, at the other extreme, a story read to the child will be a more advanced cognitive and affective experience, mediated as it is by the imagination, judgment, and sensibility of the adult.

3. How would the model fit into the rich and open experience of a primary class at its broadest? If the child's total experience of inner and outer worlds is to be freely drawn on, then a variety of structures and subjects would surely be needed. We do not want a linear rut, however deep, cut through an educational experience in which English is deeply interfused with everything else. And we should press for diffusion at later stages too.

—Working Party Number Two

ON LITERATURE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The study of literature (not the teaching of reading from a basic reader), now at last coming into its own in American elementary schools, provides in a rather informal but sequential way a look at prose and poetry that is quite different from the free recreational reading of yesterday. Children are still urged to read on their own time, but now discussion and teaching accompany the "reading of" and "being read to" of carefully selected classical and modern writing for children. The literature is not separated unnaturally from the writing children do, for in the unstructured framework of the elementary schools, "input" and "output" go hand in hand.

—Working Party Number One

The rewards of reading must, as soon as possible, be made the same as, or at least akin to, the rewards of other uses of language. What is being read must arouse curiosity and not merely be an adult approved activity.

Much of our early reading material is doctored or concocted English which in its unreality bears a resemblance to the exercises and drills which are put before the pupils throughout their school lives. Thus what is intended to encourage children to extend and enrich their language achieves the opposite effect through this devitalizing tradition. Of course, there will normally be a gap between the child's own language and that which he meets in reading, but the reading must be of such a kind that it supplies sufficient powerful reward for making the attempt.

—Study Group Number Four

ON METHODS OF TEACHING

The teacher should have confidence and competence in reading aloud for these reasons:

1. Good reading aloud is essential for "getting into" a poem or passage of prose. With many poems, good reading aloud is all that is needed in the way of classroom treatment; with others, discussion by students of various readings aloud is sufficient elucidation.

2. Reading aloud by the teacher of good literature is an excellent practice in all primary and secondary programs. (Normally there will be no comment; the British Broadcasting Corporation school programs have for years set an admirable example here, presenting good passages of prose and verse without any introduction or criticism.) Such reading is good in itself, and needs no further justification; it provides experience worth having.

Reading aloud is a most effective way of "advertising" a good book or author. Any teacher knows that the reading of an attractive passage prompts an immediate demand for the book. In drawing up his plan of readings, the teacher should try to make sure that the books are readily available in classroom or other library.

—Working Party Number One

The whole of a play may be considered as a soliloquy by the playwright, who is ventriloquizing. A playwright says what he has to say not through a monologue but through a colloquy of created voices. The ensemble of these voices externalizes his mind. This kind of ventriloquizing amounts to fractionating the total voice production of which he is capable, to breaking down his self into the many points of view, attitudes, and roles which actually and potentially comprise it. The failure of young readers to appreciate Dickens' caricatures and the failure of critics to "understand" *Waiting for Godot* stem from an insistence that each character be a whole person and that the characters are embodied tendencies and potentialities of that person. Beckett's Gogo and Didi, Pozzo and Lucky, are components of personality, paired. If a play works, communicates, it is because the same social forces that have installed voices in the author have also installed them in the spectator. Whether the playwright is sociological like Shaw, psychological like Strindberg, or both like Arthur Miller, the characters tend to speak both as personality components and as social forces. In *After the Fall* Miller finally completed a technical innovation begun by O'Neill in *Emperor Jones,* Tennessee Williams in *The Glass Menagerie,* and himself in *Death of a Salesman;* by exploiting the incorporation process for the very form of his play, he made the stage a peopled head.

Although we customarily regard thought as private and internal, it is in many respects really very impersonal and external. Original permutations of thought are really socially forged. The abstractive structures we are born with are open and flexible and may, as research in anthropology and cognitive styles shows, produce very different abstractions in different groups. It is from his groups that the individual learns these *particular* ways of cognizing and verbalizing. In view of this, a pedagogy based on provoking or eliciting thought presupposes that a child is already capable of generating the required kinds of thoughts. Asking "stimulating" questions and assigning "stimulating" reading invites the student to put out but does not give him anything, as teachers of the disadvantaged know well. In order to generate thoughts a student must have *previously* internalized

some discursive operations that he can use as tools. Elicitation has a place certainly at some stage of instruction, but more basic is to create the kinds of social discourse that when internalized become the kinds of cognitive instruments called for by later tasks. The failure of disadvantaged students to think and talk White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Middle Class prose stems obviously from their not having been talked to and with in the way White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Middle Class people talk to and with their children. But even the most advantaged child will never escape the cognitive limitations of family, class, social role, etc., unless the school provides him a kind of discursive experience to internalize that is different from what he internalized at home. The cranium is the globe, but the globe *any* child grows up in is always too small for later purposes, especially in civilization as we know it and are increasingly going to know it.[19]

—Study Group Number Two

. . .

The element of "role playing" in drama, the assumption of a mask, provides valuable experience in empathy which can extend the child's ability to handle situations and which can also inform and extend the range of registers he is capable of handling in written and spoken English. The experience with a variety of "voices" which work in drama entails can also lead to a more adequate and sensitively aware reading of literature, including nondramatic literature. Literature becomes, in fact, a further "voice" introduced into the dramatic situation of the classroom.

—Study Group Number Two

ON LITERATURE AND WRITING

It is a general experience among teachers of English in England that literature, though studied for its own sake, is the main road to good writing. Their testimony is unanimous that through his reading the child learns new sentence patterns, extends his vocabulary, acquires all the gram-

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[19] This discussion is also reported in James Moffett's *Drama: What Is Happening* (Champaign: NCTE, 1967).

mar he needs, and masters the mechanics (punctuation, use of capitals) of that language. This is borne out by Professor Boris Ford's observation of English in technical colleges and by W. G. Heath's experiment at Birmingham in library centered English,[20] and though as Professor Kitzhaber reminds us, there is "no quick and painless way to develop a well-stocked mind, a disciplined intelligence, and a discriminating taste in language and its use," the study of literature can play a chief part in the attaining of them by the route he envisages: "They are to a considerable extent the result of increasing maturity and of the total educational process acting on an intelligent mind."

—Denys Thompson

. . .

From his experience of language art the child can be led to discover how other greater and finer adult minds have tackled the same inward problems as torment him and as he has tried to solve. Creative activity can thus become a gateway to the richness of civilisation which the teacher draws from the body of English poetry, as opportunity arises, to find immediately relevant examples to nourish the inward progress of each pupil as he strives toward insight. Of course, such work can best be done in adequate conditions, in small classes, and where teachers are not overworked.

It also suggests that certain poets and writers are more relevant than others to what children are doing in their own poetry: it implies a revision of English syllabus (both in school and teacher training) in which certain of the more direct and simple poets—Clare, Crabbe, Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience,* Edward Thomas, Robert Frost, the poems of Po Chu-I translated by Arthur Waley, folksongs—are more valuable in contributing to struggles in which the child is already engaged by symbolism while others which are more complex and remote such as Milton or the more "Miltonic" work of poets like Wordsworth, Arnold,

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[20]W. G. Heath, "Library Centered English," *Educational Review,* XIV, No. 2.

and Tennyson, should perhaps be left for later self-discovery. A similar revaluation needs to be made of prose (Twain and Lawrence rather than Poe or the *belle lettrists*).

Certainly it is important to cherish naivety. Too much of the poetry given to secondary school children seems to me too academic, and now there is a fashion for false modernity: the essential need for deep but sensitive symbolism must be borne in mind.

—David Holbrook

ON THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS

The kind of approach we envisage can help the teacher who, at present, so often seems unable to use his intuition; so many teachers just aren't human. They overexplicate, analyze too much, and above all seem unable to know when to stop. A little initial explanation may help the student as nothing else can, but how does a teacher get the sureness of touch which will prevent him from going too far? Of course, this is partly a matter of practice. But the main essential, aside from knowledge and awareness of the subject, is surely tact and human understanding. This leads the teacher to see, for example, the latent possibilities of some of Emily Dickinson's poems and the way, relevant for adolescents, in which she did and did not grow up; her oblique approach can be very congenial to young people. But no single subject is ideal for all classes of groups of a given age; there must be time for the calculated digression to allow the student to revert to something which in theory he has left behind, like nursery rhymes, if the need arises. So external planning, for the individual or for his department, must allow for such things much more than it does now. And we must get away from the sense of guilt, which troubles so many teachers and prevents them from allowing their classes to *enjoy* the work. If any single reform is needed in English, it is the reintroduction of *pleasure* into what is done in the English period.

There may seem an apparent paradox here. You need to be something of a scholar, to know your material, if you are

to teach others; at the same time you must know how to keep your knowledge in the background, to come to the work in hand freshly, and to divine the minds of the students in class or group. In England at the present time the most enlightened thinking along such lines is to be found in colleges of education. Some of these show that they appreciate the degree to which the study of literature can in itself be part of the ultimate education experience, for literature is ultimately about human beings, what they are like, what their values are, and how they behave; the study of teaching this dimension of English should form a central part of the experience of teaching. It is here that scholarly understanding and awareness of children should meet.

—Working Party Number Three

SELECTED READINGS ON RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

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